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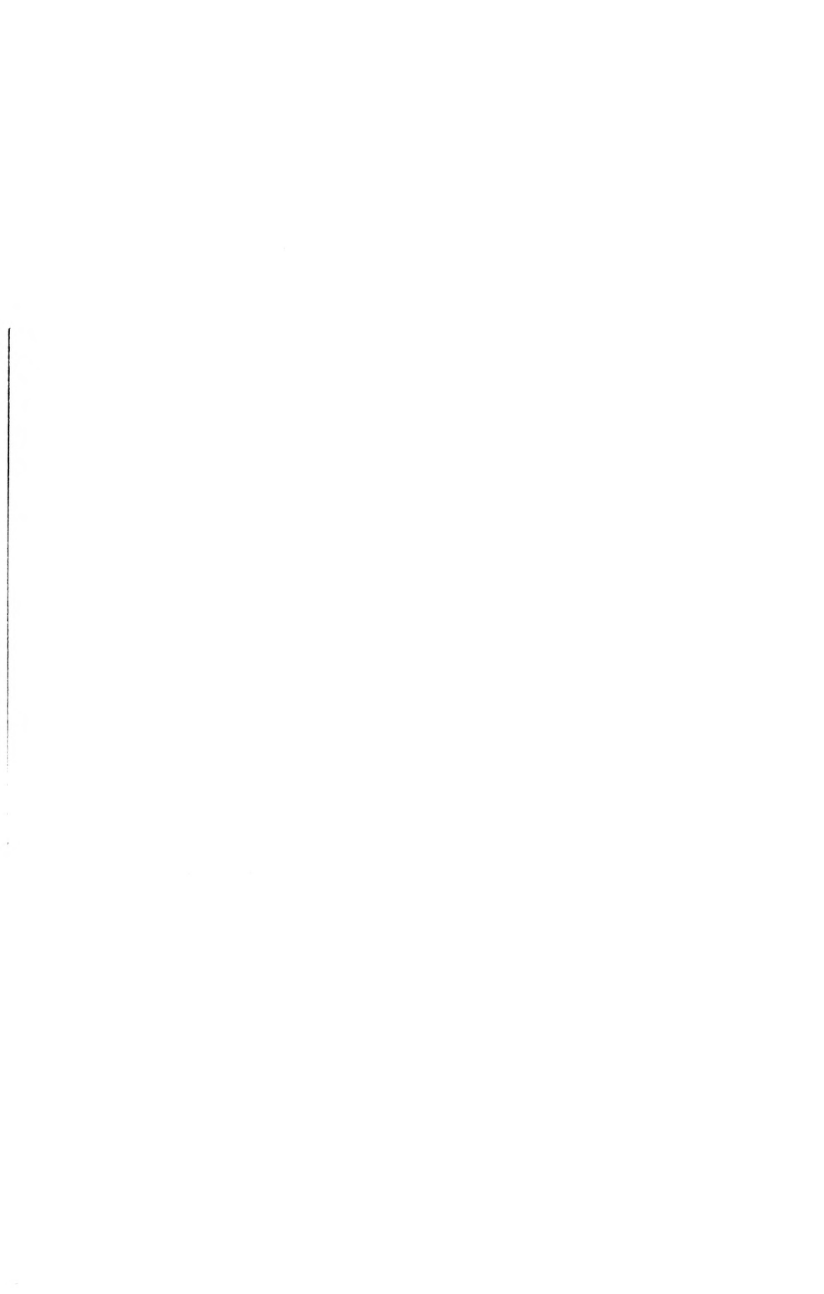
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SIMON PETER:

HIS EARLY LIFE AND TIMES.

BY

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PREFACE.

THE experiment, which has been ventured upon in the present volume, has been somewhat difficult, and I do not yet see whether it will be altogether successful. The chapters are nothing more or less than lectures delivered in the course of my pastoral work in the pulpit. I have wondered if they would not prove easier reading if they were cast into the form of a biographical sketch, taking up the incidents in the order of the Harmonics of the Gospels. But, do what I would, they are very much like expository discourses now; and I am willing to help the notion by adding texts to the Table of Contents. I positively like an occasional repetition of thought and didactic illustration which I detect; for such lessons are precisely what I hope most from in any forms of good they may do. So I dismiss the work to the public, frankly, with a wish that those who love this old disciple as I do, may be helped under the rehearsal of his weaknesses and strengths as I have been along the years which were spent in the study of his career.

CHARLES SEYMOUR ROBINSON.

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SIMON PETER, HIS EARLY LIFE AND TIMES.

CHAPTER I.

A MISUNDERSTOOD DISCIPLE.

Ralph Waldo Emerson once gave this definition of a weed: "A weed is a plant out of place." But later in his life, he happened to be commenting upon the skill of naturalists in the investigation of vegetable forms, habits, and peculiarities. His admiration was kindled, as he thought how many thousands of species and genera had been already classified in the botanies. "Hence a new definition of a weed," he continued; "a weed is a plant not yet understood."

It is easy to classify fishermen of Galilee as apostles "out of place." But it would be fairer to wait a while; possibly we shall be willing before long to follow the hasty definition with the corrective, and say they may be apostles "not yet understood." At all events, the biography of such a man as Simon Peter will bear some more study. We may be sure it will rise in our estimation in proportion to the measure of acquaintance we reach with its particulars and its purpose. For the fact is, he has been frightfully misrepresented for centuries.

Simon Peter stands at this hour in a very peculiar position, as between two registers of public opinion. On the one side, cavilers have found fault with his low origin, his impulsive disposition, his rough manners, and especially his great sin of denying his Lord. On the other side, tradition-makers have exalted him to the headship of a hierarchical system, and have so surrounded his biography with tales of foolish fancy that the real man is lost. A fair question is before us: Is the world willing to accept a true picture of the Apostle of the Circumcision? The glamour of what is called high-art, as well as the superstition of high-churchism, conceals his figure. Yet there never lived an honester, plainer, or more thoroughly genuine man. It is unfair that all the useful force of his human record should be surrendered, just because a dressing-block is needed in a system, itself created out of a perversion. Even John Milton in his "Lycidas" talks about—

"The pilot of the Galilean lake;
Two massy keys he bore, of metals twain,
(The golden opes, the iron shuts amain);
He shook his mitred locks, and stern bespake."

With the triple crown on his head, and the great keys in his hand, the imagination grows bewildered in trying to conceive of a "pilot" in guise of a priest. Such a creature is no more a fisher of men than a fisher of fish. He is but a vague unreality, and eludes all attempts at classification.

Simply told, the narrative of Simon's life is one of the most romantic in this world's history. He was the

only man ever known to cast a hook in deep water for a coin to pay his taxes with. He was the only man we read of whose feet trod on waves, finding, until his faith failed, a foothold underneath them like rock. He came forth of a sudden from the obscurity of a recordless existence into a front rank as a preacher of the new gospel; yet his greatest lesson of doctrine was received from a sheet full of living creatures, clean and unclean, dropped down out of heaven. He was led out of prison by an angel, who bewildered him as he delivered him; and when he stood at the door of a familiar prayer-meeting, the friends on their knees declared he was his own ghost.

There was never anything whatsoever about Simon Peter to be set down as tame or commonplace. Had he any father to be proud of? Yes; but all we know of Jonas is that Simon was his son. What was his mother's descent? Nobody can tell; it was left to after years for visionary tradition to give her the name of Johanna. Had he a wife? One evangelist says he had a mother-in-law cured of a fever by miracle; and an apostle adds that he "led about" a sister, a wife. Had he daughters? Artists explain some singular pictures by repeating the romance of the palsied Petronilla. Had he any other children? Many scholars still insist that Mark, the evangelist, was his offspring, and had the right to be called literally "Marcus, my son."

Then again, when we leave the literature of legend, we enter the weird realm of architecture; and we find the walls everywhere covered with stucco and with

gold; limned with frescoes and crusted with mosaics; forth from which the rugged face of this key-bearing ecclesiastic looks down upon the generations passing beneath.

In some cathedrals, his baptism is pictured; in others, that strange meeting with Jesus by the river. In stone, he is kneeling as he was when near the olives in Gethsemane; in bronze, he is reaching out his finger like a modern pope; on canvas, he is discovered hiding his face from the ineffable radiance, while Jesus Christ is on the mountain transfigured with Moses and Elias. At one time, this Galilean fisherman meets us at the first communion table; and then he is singing the hymn before they pass out. At another time, the same figure meets us in the presence of the maid-servants; and now he is swearing to his terrible denial. Then we notice him outside the gate of a palace, and he is weeping bitterly over his folly in the light of a passover moon; and before we leave the histories of that period of sorrow, we meet him on the shore of Gennesaret, beside another fire of coals, where Immanuel is putting the question which has come down the ages to each one of us, "Lovest thou Me?" At the last, in solemn shadows of life's evening, he appears alone, on the cross, head downwards, crucified with his feet in the air. "Happy man," says fanciful Chrysostom, "to be set in the readiest posture of travel from earth into heaven!"

Thus constantly we recognize that face and form, till we begin to know him from all the myriad saints and martyrs. He really becomes so identified with

Gothic arches and clerestory windows in forests of stone, that almost in an elm-grove men catch themselves looking upwards for a possible glimpse of his head among the lines of crossing branches or the shimmer of sunshine in the leaves.

Still, it is most likely that the common people read the history of Simon Peter in the gospels rather for its great human features and display of new life in Jesus Christ. He is thoroughly a man. For good or for ill he is Simon, son of Jonas, from beginning to end. Christ rebukes him, and Paul censures him. Yet, in personal characteristics, Peter continues unaltered and unalterable. He did fall terribly many times; but we feel that he rose again in such a radical form of penitence and contrition that he deserves instantly to have one more chance; and we hurry to him with a return of regard. Such a man's battles are our battles. The human mistakes he made are those that we need to be warned against.

There is no one of all this disciple's failings that is away from our reach; our exposures are perilously like his. So a quick sort of sympathy springs up between us. Our sensibilities, in certain moods of self-searching, actually welcome the guidance of his experience. We are not offended by the verses of that hymn which makes each of us enter a like confession whenever we sing it:

“Jesus, let thy pitying eye call back a wandering sheep;
False to thee, like Peter, I would fain like Peter weep!
Let me be by grace restored; on me be all long-suffering shown;
Turn, and look upon me, Lord! and break my heart of stone.”

Such a life must be worth studying, with a painstaking and detailed canvass of all its particulars. But the whole force of our instruction from it will turn upon the power we have to transfer a series of conflicts and triumphs to our own experience. We must identify him with ourselves; we must, therefore, constrain our imaginations to look upon him as an everyday man. Then, when we realize the mighty meaning of his mission, we shall understand him.

It is no purpose of the writer of these pages to deny that Simon Peter received a sort of headship among the disciples; there was a specific work to which Jesus called him in the establishment of the visible church. By nature he was a leader of his kind. The age he lived in was one of exciting outlook and eager expectancy. His race is historic for its incarnate enthusiasm and heroic adventure. Rightly has the Jew been called by Tholuck, "The Man of a Future." Everything in Israelitish annals used to appear waiting for a coming something to complete it. Thus Simon leaped into his place, like an athlete springing into an arena, with a full consciousness of a work to be done, and a hope to be caught from it. Our divine Lord recognized the efficiency he wished in this man, and commissioned him at once for the fashioning of an organic body of believers on the earth which should live through the ages.

The one turning-point of Simon Peter's biography, on the instant of which all the rest hinges, is that at which we first meet his face, when Andrew, his brother, brings him to Jesus. Patriotic aspiration, personal

enthusiasm, religious traditions of a matchless past, all find their fulfilment. The disclosure of the Messiah in Jesus pervades the entire being of this Galilean fisherman; it sways his religion from Judaism to Christianity; it fixes his future career, and governs his life.

It must be this alone which explains the conduct of our Lord when he chose such a man for so exalted a place, with so slight a preparation. Looking down through even the next three years—time of mighty meaning and vast import to the world—surely he foresaw, in divine wisdom, how flexible Peter's faith was to be; how scandalously unsteady his course would, for a while, prove. He understood, even while Andrew stood there, introducing this strange brother, that the near future would disclose all manner of weakness in him. Simon was really going to be no Cephas at all for many a long day; there was, at the present moment, nothing of the rock in him but its roughness—except, perhaps, its capability of hardening under exposures of extraordinary, but salutary discipline.

Can we doubt, moreover, that Jesus perceived in the distance the great shadow of the denial, and all the attendant gloom of defection in the early church? No doubt, also, he foresaw the perverse dissimulation at Antioch, of which Peter would be so notoriously guilty that even Paul would withstand him to the face as one to be blamed. We may imagine that Jesus knew all the miserable folly which would follow the bestowal of that new name he was giving to this son of Jonas; how a hierarchy of self-seekers would

take it up, and fashion out of it a figment of popish successions; how primacy and prelacy would stubbornly contend over a narrow difference between the genders of *petros* and *petra*, all along down the lonely ages.

Yet our Lord Jesus did choose and call to himself this man; advanced him to a position of authority, and laid on him his supreme charge. From all which it must seem clear to us in these days, that, while he is to be accepted as available, he cannot be pronounced altogether infallible; he may serve well as an organizer, but he makes poor show as a pope.

It is evident that we shall never understand this singular disciple until we ascertain the purpose for which the providence of God selected him. We say that helpful men must carefully be looked up. In the classic story Diogenes had melancholy work at that task. The Scripture expression is "raised up." We are told that the Lord "raised up" Othniel; he "raised up" Moses; he "raised up" David; it is even said that he "raised up" Pharaoh. Hence, the disclosure is beyond any contradiction, as a settled principle in the divine government: God is wont to leave nothing to accident. There never is any good for any age in waiting for the coming man to arrive. When the Lord is ready for his presence, he will summon him to the lead. And so far in the annals of the human race, in every great exigency of history, the coming man was, after all the searching, found to have been on the ground the whole time, only nobody knew it.

God's choice is all that can be needed to render

the most unremarkable individual instantly eminent. Divine wisdom deliberately selected these humble but trustworthy witnesses of the Messiah's mission and work, and, in their mature middle life, hurried them startlingly out into public notice. They were actually "raised up." The Evangelists count them as in no wise worthy of their pens until they have gained the dignity of a recognition from Immanuel, the Saviour of the world. But the instant they became his followers, the swift record began to trace the particulars of their speech and action. As they held up the torch of truth through the prominent years of their evangelical service, and waved it widely, so that all darkened men should see the face of Jesus, they could not help but that their own countenances should be unconsciously brilliant with the very light which their fidelity and enthusiasm flashed around him.

Thus, then, we conclude that the only key of explanation which will fit the wards of such a historic mystery as that represented in the career of Simon Peter—to some a mere fisherman, and to others a mere prelate—is found in the call God gave him, the times he lived in, and the special work that he was raised up to do. This disciple will always be misunderstood, and will never be registered for what he really was, until his biography is patiently and affectionately studied as a harmonious whole. "Blessed is the man whom thou chooseth, and causeth to approach unto thee." And the man whom Christ chose for his disciple will be estimated wisely and fairly only when the result of the choice is made known.

CHAPTER II.

SIMON'S PARENTAGE AND HOME.

On the western side of the Sea of Tiberias, around which little inland sheet of water are gathered so many interesting and instructive memories, once stood a quiet village called Bethsaida, which name in the Syriac dialect signified "Fishing town." Close down upon the beach, it must have been situated at no great distance, in a straight line, from Capernaum, somewhere about the middle of the angular bend bounding the northwestern shore. This was a different place from that beside which our Lord performed the miracle of feeding the five thousand, though bearing the same designation. Of this last, the town where the famous wonder was wrought, even now there remain some few lonely fragments of ruins. But of that Bethsaida in which Jesus Christ found his "Man," no vestiges at all can be discovered. It is mentioned in the Scripture narrative as "Bethsaida of Galilee," most likely to distinguish it from the other, to which in subsequent years was given the name of "Julias" when Philip the Tetrarch rebuilt it and re-adorned it for his official residence. Both are gone, but the poorest vanished first. And in calm unconsciousness of its secret, the small sea shines on and tells the traveler no tales of its former years; it was there before the villages arose, and it remains there now alone.

It is possible for a spot, therefore, to slip off from a map, and yet cling tenaciously in history. For the

remembrance of this little, lost town is imperishable, from the fact that here, within its narrow precincts, were reared five of the twelve men whom our Lord raised up to be his chosen disciples, and commissioned as his successors in establishing the New Testament church. These five were Simon Peter and Andrew, James, John, and Philip.

The early name by which Peter was known was Simon or Simeon, and his father's name was Jonas or John. The affix which we sometimes find in the Gospels, Simon Bar-Jona, comes from this. Bar-Jona means Son of Jonas or John, just as Bartimeus means Son of Timæus. This was one of the ordinary ways of distinguishing any individual in those times. When there might happen to be two bearing a like name the name of his father was joined to his own. Andrew, who was the brother of Simon, was of course a Bar-Jona too, John's son, as we phrase it. And that must be what Dr. Hamilton is to be understood as saying, when he casually mentions these two fishermen of Bethsaida as "the two celebrated Johnsons of Fishing-town."

Both of these men, Andrew and Simon Peter, become measurably conspicuous at last, but in the beginning of their career they advance abruptly into the inspired story, unheralded, undescribed in appearance, unknown as to antecedents. We meet them quite in the maturity of life; of their youthful biography there is told us almost nothing. There was nobody to keep the simple annals of that obscure hamlet, if indeed it had ever happened to have any.

These villagers present themselves first far away from their home. Simon has no more extensive introduction than his brother can give him; and it chances in this case that we are less acquainted with Andrew, whom we conjecture to be the elder of the two, than with the younger. The fact is, they both owe the celebrity they attained to the extraordinary company they afterwards fell into, and the illustrious companionship they shared with the world's Redeemer. They are luminous because they are lit. It is most fitting, therefore, that each of them in turn should come before our eyes standing in the full light of Jesus Christ as he enters upon his public ministry.

It is not possible that a biographer of such a man as Simon Peter should proceed in the ordinary way and relate the signs of early genius he displayed, or gather together floating traditions of the neighborhood to show his precocity or his undeveloped gifts. Whatever can be told has found its way into one or another of the evangelical histories, and will eventually find its place in our recitals. But what is more to our immediate purpose is the fact that whatever he came to be ultimately grew out of the design for which he was "raised up."

"I have created seven seas, saith the Lord, but out of them all I have chosen none but the Sea of Genesaret": so the admiring rabbins tell us in the Talmud. Yet most travelers now would omit panegyrics of poetical description, and confine their thoughts to the wondrously noble associations of the scenes around. For in no respect could that rather

dull sheet of water be compared favorably with Lago di Como, with Loch Katrine, or with Lake George.

Perhaps a tamer impression is made because of the absence of the ancient population, on the one hand, or of the want of sylvan solitudes on the other. For the suggestion at the present time is neither that of rural picturesqueness nor of artificial beauty. An air of desolation and barrenness is over all the landscape. An uneasy sense of pensiveness bars the enjoyment which one might possibly feel elsewhere; for the remembrance of a vanished past keeps rising, the vision of a lost opportunity and a violent retribution.

Some quiet shadows lie along the ridges of rock, but no huge or daring precipices break their lines. We discern no colossal or pinnacled mountains nearer than Lebanon. There are no solemnities of caverns or glooms of ravines in the uninteresting shores. The verdureless hills are sterile, but their bleaknesses are not extensive enough to be grand; they are steep, but they could not be considered massive. And with all the brightness of this lake, at its loveliest season, many tourists find themselves the rather surprised than pleased. Something is lacking. The cities are needed for a sort of answer to an inarticulate question. Nine towns used to light up these shores with a human presence of thrift. Then there were villas and palaces, baths and theaters, standing for coolness so close down upon the beach that their white walls shone reflected in the water. Contrasted with the wild and melancholy grandeur of Southern Palestine,

this scenery here at the north is full of an exhilarating cheer of sweet sunshine. If that be fitly called the Dead Sea, this is certainly the Life Sea—only the life is gone.

The dimensions of Lake Gennesaret are insignificant. It is only about six miles wide where the water is broadest, and not far from thirteen miles long. And so pure and clear is the summer atmosphere around it that it appears much smaller than it really is. To a scant strip of territory close by the northern bend, at which the Jordan flows in, perhaps four miles by three in extent, was attached the name of the "Land of Gennesaret." Into this area in ancient times was crowded the lazy and luxurious life of the dissolute nobles of degenerate Israel. For, during the years while Simon Peter was a boy, much of the fashion of Herod's iniquitous court found here its worst resort.

Whether this lake took its name from the shore, or the shore from the lake, is not certain. The word is said to mean "a harp"—perhaps in allusion to the figure of the sheet of water. Some declare that it comes from two other words signifying "Valley of Flowers:" and then it has been rendered also, "The Gardens of the Chief." Very appropriate this last designation: for the historic day has been when that exquisite plain covered with its rich verdure, shadowed with towering palms and waving oleanders, variegated with vines and pomegranates, with groves of oranges and copses of tamarisks here and there, vocal in each early morning with the songs of a

myriad of brilliant birds—was one of the most beautiful paradises of the princes of Naphtali. The fertility of this strip of soil, lying near the junction of the Jordan with the lake, rendered it unusually prolific of all sorts of agricultural products; and the depression of the valley, so characteristic clear down to its vast depth in the neighborhood of Jericho, offered an almost tropical climate for some fruits, flowers, and grains that the uplands did not furnish. Then, too, the lake was stocked with fish from time immemorial, as it is now, especially where the river makes its rich deposits from the country above. That in so close a proximity two Bethsaidas should have existed, the very name of which—“Fishing-town”—indicates the staple of their trade and industry, shows the source of prosperity and importance of the occupation pursued by Jonas and Zebedec.

Nor, if the accounts of those early times are to be trusted, was the commerce of this part of Galilee to be despised. Damascus and Babylon, each a large metropolis of luxury, poured forth their wares into a series of bazaars all along the shores of the Sea of Tiberias. On the western side were hot springs for bathing; and these added not a little to the attractions of the vicinity, to the crowds of people who came swarming in the autumn months to this inland seashore on their way into Italy.

The moment we conceive of these slopes on every quarter as covered with towns, and populous with country residences—and then picture the hundreds of hardy seamen gliding at all hours of the day or night

out or in, going or returning—the yards for building the boats ringing with the sounds of the mallets—the barges of pleasure furling their white canvas, scudding before the refreshing winds from the hills toward Lebanon, gay with the garments of the proud parties of fashion and nobility they were wont to carry—the walks alongside bright with a profusion of beautiful chariots drawn by horses from Arabia in caparisons of silver and gold—the paths near the water glittering with a score of markets where the fabrics of the far Orient vied with the coarser but (to the quiet townsmen) the more attractive show, a confused mingling of nets and sails and tackling, with shawls and silks upon the same counter competing for purchasers among the rich and the poor—the entire circle of the lake excited with life—then we begin to understand that we have assuredly been much mistaken hitherto, if we have been in the habit of supposing that the disciples of our Lord Jesus Christ were brought up in an out-of-the-way neighborhood, away from the world, in the ignorance and seclusion of the small hamlet where they learned only to handle fishing-nets and wield oars. They were the lower class of inhabitants, it is true; it is likely that the aristocratic people had only a supercilious notion of them—as visitors at modern watering-places now have of those who work to supply their tables. But it would be far from right to suppose they lived in seclusion and stillness.

Right within sight was Capernaum—of which indeed Bethsaida was almost a suburb. The little town of

El-Tabijah, that still lingers to mark the spot where Simon's early home was located, has yet the fountains and the indolent mill-wheels working near the beach, very much as the fisher-boy must have heard them groaning and splashing when they (or their ancestor-wheels like them) drove the force for the tanneries and potteries that supplied the simple wants of those who lived their lives there.

On the same western side, only a short distance further, was Tiberias; and he who had seen Tiberias, as it was then, had an inspiring notion of what the vast world must be. Simon would have visited the place a hundred times. It stood hardly more than five or six miles from his common fishing-ground; he could see the glimmer of the gilded roof with which Herod had covered his palace, every morning when he came in from his toil and the sun climbed over the slight hills of Gadara. No matter into what market these fishermen went to sell their spoils, they met that great rushing world face to face which Christianity was to contend with and subdue.

The Roman race had interjected themselves and their manners into Palestine, and especially into Galilee. The Jews kept the eminent lead as yet. They held the land; they cultivated the olive-trees and trained the vines; they controlled the arts of industry. But the country was crowded with immigrants, and crossed with caravans. Foreigners kept coming from India and Persia, wearing curious dresses and having beautiful embroideries to sell. Light-clad, turban-crowned merchants appeared everywhere,

offering spices from far Arabia, with unguents in alabaster boxes, and cosmetics for ladies' toilets. There were to be found constantly Alexandrians and a motley crowd of Greeks. All the world urged its way into this open province, from which the imperial power had forced fabulous tribute of wealth. Palestine became a sort of gathering-place for an indescribable horde of people whose principles were easy, whose errands were gain, and whose motive was anything for an adventure.

The Italian conquerors brought mixed customs along; they did not leave behind them so much as their vices. They had their gladiatorial shows, their chariot-races, their slaves and their pimps. In common with all the rest of the Gentile world, they spoke their own language, wore their own fashions of clothing, set up the temples of their own gods. The new edifices they erected for worship and for games brought likewise to the shores of the lake of Gennesaret a fresh increase of barbarian inhabitants; for the fiat went forth from the omnipotent fashion of the day that nobody could venture to build a hippodrome, a bath, or a shrine, except an artist from Athens drew the model, and cunning workmen from Macedonia finished the adornments in bronze and silver and gold.

So the streets in all the towns were filled with people from every name and nation. And among them always roamed the wild sons of Ishmael, the Bedouin children of the desert, coming when the ripened harvests gave them invitation to steal, pasturing their

slow herds where the grain stood the tallest, pitching their tents upon any man's acres as if they were lords of the soil, owning fealty alone to the strongest sword that chastised them, obeying neither a Jewish mandate nor a Roman, and gliding out of reach with a signal quicker than a shadow, leaving desolation wilder than a scourge.

It is not necessary to say, therefore, that those five fishermen, whom our Lord chose for his apostles among the rest, were a poor, illiterate set of people, without knowledge of the world; for indeed they had a chance to learn much of it, though they were forty years in Galilee only. This boy Simon with his brother Andrew, as well as John with his brother James, may have been from what we call a low rank in society, but not from the lowest. There appears to have been some measure of consideration and wealth belonging to both families, first and last.

CHAPTER III.

BOYHOOD IN GENNESARET.

That period of life through which human beings pass between the ages of ten and twenty is generally understood as fixing the character of much of that which remains. We are forced to trace in the biography of the Apostle of the Circumcision influences of his early training that in the time of it must have been altogether unappreciated by himself. We must endeavor therefore to form full acquaintance with the real surroundings of his childhood. His home, insignificant as it was, was situated precisely where the hurry and bustle of Galilean life were at their highest; and there is reason to suppose that his parents had some severe struggles with a nature so imaginative and impulsive, before they brought it always into calm obedience.

Young Simon, rough fisher-boy that he was, grew familiar with every scene around the northern end of the Sea of Galilee. He found an easy market for all his daily gains from the night-fishing. Those fashionable people may have learned to know the spirited lad, who came up regularly with his boat, and in an amiable sort of vanity beached it with a flourish of skill at the entrance of their villas, while his father Jonas brought out the shining mullet for their luxurious food—this boy with the keen eyes looking out from under his small white cap, his olive-colored arms thrust forth from the brown-striped loose coat,

so that he might lay hold of the oars or drop the sail suddenly at the word of command. There must have been a kind of half-swagger in his manner even then, for this good creature always kept a self-consciousness, no matter what motions he made.

It is only by considering Simon son of Jonas as subject to the same regimen as other Jewish lads of the period, that we arrive at any conclusion concerning his actual life during his youth. The age of twelve years was one of singular importance to all boys in that methodical nation. The Jewish annals assert that this was the time when Solomon made the extraordinary choice of wisdom that placed him at the head of the learned—when Samuel was called publicly forward by the voice of Jehovah at Shiloh—when Moses threw in his lot with the people of God, and forsook the home offered to him by Pharaoh's daughter—a time always to be observed.

At this age, so we learn from the Rabbins, any son of devout parents ought to be, and generally was, apprenticed to some occupation which would bring him respectable support. The solemn injunction was, "He that does not teach his child a trade brings him up to be a thief." These lads became now, also, "sons of the law," and were obliged to observe the fasts and keep the feasts of their nation. About this time, too, they began to wear the small phylacteries on their foreheads—strips of parchment with sentences lettered upon them from the precepts of Moses. They were now treated with a sort of consideration, as if they were little men.

As a reason for this, we are told by one of the Hebrew sages that, until he reached twelve years of age, no young lad possessed anything more than a mere inspiration of animal life. But at that period, or thereabouts, he received an intelligent spirit, which, if he lived virtuously afterward, would at twenty years old be certain to develop into the reasonable soul of a man!

There were in those days schools in connection with each synagogue. Perhaps Bethsaida was not a town large enough for either; but if so, Capernaum was close at hand. The Hebrews made great account of education in the Scriptures. And we must remember that a fair amount of learning was received when a child had committed an ordinary Book of Moses to heart. For the Scriptures were their annals of history, their theology, their legislation, their moral enactments, and their literature, all things in one. We conceive of those quiet families in Gennesaret very favorably in this respect. Simon's father Jonas and his mother—of whom we know only a tradition that her name was Johanna—together with John's parents Zebedee and Salome, no doubt were devout and godly people. When they sang the ancient Psalms, they doubtless sought to obey the admonitions implied in them. They passed along the truths they received, "showing to the generation to come the praises of the Lord, and his strength, and his wonderful works that he hath done. For he established a testimony in Jacob, and appointed a law in Israel, which he commanded our fathers, that they

should make them known to their children : that the generation to come might know them, even the children which should be born : who should arise and declare them to their children : that they might set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep his commandments."

To one who has visited the modern schools in the East, there will be needed now no suggestion as to the manner in which this Simon son of Jonas was kept at work in his boyhood. According to Israelitish custom and rule, a lad should study the Bible at the age of five, though he might not attend public school till he was six ; at ten years old, he might take up the Mishna ; and at fifteen, he ought to begin on the Talmud. From twenty to forty pupils are committed to one master. They all occupy a single room, sitting upon mats around against the walls, and facing the teacher. The method of instruction is oral, but boys are allowed to have tablets somewhat like slates, upon which they write the lessons with chalk pencils to assist their memory. The main work is done in concert. A sentence is read by the pedagogue ; and then the scholars say it over after him—all together with a shout—and they usually accompany the vociferation with an awkward rocking backwards and forwards of their bodies on their heels, beating time to the iterations.

The Jews always were very particular about these educational matters. When Josephus argued against Apion, he said truly, "Our principal care of all is

to educate our children." Even the Talmud laid it down as one of its wisest precepts, "the world is preserved by the breath of the children in the schools."

So long have we been accustomed to attach a semi-mythical existence and character to the actual men and women and children mentioned in the Bible, that it may not be easy at first to recognize the picture of Jonas' son in a scene like this. But in all probability Simon's lot was similar to that of others then—a lot much the same as that of fisher-boys in Galilee now, as it may be watched any time in the town of Tiberias. He lived just as little boys live everywhere in the East, a sort of vagabond and untidy life until they reach an age which fits them for serviceableness in doors or out; then usually something is found for all human beings to do.

A very commonplace sentiment often becomes dignified when ingeniously wrought into verse: so Wordsworth has been credited with originality in the saying that "the child is father of the man." Judging from his manifestations afterwards, this young Simon must have been a fidgety, restless scholar at his tasks, perhaps insubordinate on occasion; a daring boy and combative; frequently impetuous and headstrong; brave, when only rocks and waves and squalls of wind beset him; pusillanimous, when the threats of a bigger lad frightened him; curiously inquisitive in watching interesting foreigners, and never bashful in questions when he wanted to know.

But just as he passed from ten to twelve years of age, there happened a series of events which must

have made some impression over all Palestine, and which certainly controlled his whole career.

For then it was reported widely among the villages that down in Bethlehem some shepherds tending their flocks out upon the hillside in the night had heard a wonderful song from a choir of angel voices overhead, announcing that the MESSIAH—so long and passionately waited for—so anxiously expected at any moment to arrive—had come indeed. The Babe was actually born who was to become manifest as the Everlasting Father and the Prince of Peace.

Two things acted together, in all likelihood, to render the birth of Jesus Christ of far less account than it deserved to have in the estimation of people who resided in Northern Galilee at the time. They were under the impression that when the Messiah really did appear it would be in such a way as that the leaders of the nation would recognize and announce him immediately. Then the whole waiting world would hasten to his feet. Now, in the case of this Jesus—although everybody admitted that singular stories had been reported, and some believed that the angelic songs had in fact been heard, and oriental sages had rendered their homage and delivered their gifts—yet none of the Jewish rulers believed on him.

Then, also, by reason of the violence of Herod, the child already was out of sight. He had disappeared with his parents in Egypt. All trace of him was lost. But the conduct of the king advertised the matter more than anything else. He was

determined to lay his hands on the babe, and put an end to all peril from it, by his usual methods of deliverance from what alarmed or vexed him in the kingdom. He evidently imagined that those Magi, who came making inquiry, would be successful in finding the infant ; and he appears to have pledged them to let him know its whereabouts. But a divine suggestion in a dream sent them away in another direction.

“Then Herod, when he saw that he was mocked of the wise men, was exceeding wroth, and sent forth, and slew all the children that were in Bethlehem, and in all the coasts thereof, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had diligently inquired of the wise men.”

Such news might not of itself have aroused the interest of a young lad like Simon, who could hardly comprehend its vast meaning as yet. But accompanied by the awful tidings of extensive murders among innocent children, the story would make all Palestine recoil with a shudder. The tidings traveled with gathering exaggerations through Samaria into Galilee, until most likely when the report of the king's crime reached so excitable a center as Bethsaida it was magnified to a general massacre of extermination. A great wail of grief and consternation ran sounding through the entire country.

“Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremy the prophet, saying, in Rama was there a voice heard, lamentation, and weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children, and would not be comforted, because they are not.”

Before long, however, the agitation subsided. For ere long, amid many confusions, Joseph and Mary quietly came home from Egypt across the desert sands, withdrawing to Nazareth with the Child of promise and hope. So mysterious time glided on.

Nobody noticed that now a new era had begun. A hitherto unknown reckoning had come to draw its line across history. Somehow a mistake of four years was dropped at the start; but the clock of the ages just then unperceivedly struck ANNO DOMINI I.

It can be understood that any one who is watching a sunrise will be less likely to be found looking around upon the landscapes disclosed by it. Indeed, outlines would look dim and shadowy, and it is possible that some objects might appear distorted. One who set himself about reducing to history the events of that first morning hour, would surely give most of his record to the glimmerings of the light and the flash of beautiful colors. The busy hum of awakening life would come into his description afterward, if at all, and never with much clearness of detail, as having been a recollection rather than an experience—a necessity, not an enthusiasm.

Such a suggestion keeps recurring to the student of Gospel annals during all his inquiries concerning that special period of the world in which our Lord Jesus Christ appeared. People who were sober enough to watch at all, were watching the rising of the Sun of Righteousness; they had little heart to give to those minor circumstances that would be

reckoned in an ordinary man's life—such as, for example, that of Simon, the son of Jonas. It disappoints us to find so slight references to him in these momentous years of revolution, combat, and change. But what was one common man then!

We conjecture that he remained in Galilee all the time: that he took up fishing for a business—that his life, from the age of twelve to forty, was passed in the diligence of his rough calling. It would be natural for us to draw imaginative pictures of his daily existence—to think of the gentle influences and enjoyments of nature around him; the scenery of the lake; the grand moonlight in the night ventures; the brightness of the water when he rowed in to market in the morning; the shadows on the afternoon hills; and the beat of the mill-wheels working beside the torrents on the shore.

To such as ourselves, we will say, all these surroundings appear full of interest, full almost of intoxicating delight, if our love of out-door life is keen. But many of us know that the majority of rural people, who reside in the constant companionship of a mountain range, a sparkling cascade, or a mirror-like lake, become familiar with everything we think we discover in the scenery; and, unless some one possessed of a poetic temperament and a habit of close observation shall be found here and there, the whole neighborhood will be voted commonplace. A rustic sees only plain facts:

“ A primrose by a river's brim
A yellow primrose is to him,
And it is nothing more.”

A remark was once made by Niemeyer which was considered of so much significance that Dean Howson has seen fit to place it on the title-page of his *Horæ Petrinæ* as a motto, and yet, it would seem as if anybody could make it, after moderate study: "In Peter is more of human nature than in any other of the apostles." And certainly those who are familiar with villages inhabited mostly by fishermen, would conjecture that the human nature there displayed would generally be of a quite commonplace type. We should not suppose that this boy of Jonas', helping in all his daily tasks to mend nets and man boats, as his father directed, would show anything more concerning his great future as a leader of the church than the rest of his toiling comrades in the same town. Perhaps, therefore, we have lost nothing because of the silence that surrounds him. He lived and grew older.

And all this time, just a few miles from Bethsaida, the real Christ of God was "increasing in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man." No indication comes to us that Simon ever saw or heard of that carpenter's Child over in Nazareth, during these tumultuous years. It fairly arrests our imagination to think of a nearness so undiscovered and unconscious. Two lives were within a day's walk of each other—moving towards two distant crosses—on their way to a common triumph and trial: but Mary simply pondered mysterious sayings in her heart, and Simon was not yet Peter.

CHAPTER IV.

GOING UP TO JERUSALEM.

It would not be far out of the way, if we should assert that the youthful Simon—perhaps with his parents, and in company with the other Bethsaida boys among the neighbors—went up to Passover for the first time within a year or two of the return of Joseph to Nazareth with Mary and her infant child Jesus. For the ancient requisition of the law was peremptory, and such truly religious people as Jonas and Zebedee would see it strictly obeyed:

“Three times in a year shall all thy males appear before the Lord thy God in the place which he shall choose; in the feast of unleavened bread, and in the feast of weeks, and in the feast of tabernacles: and they shall not appear before the Lord empty: every man shall give as he is able, according to the blessing of the Lord thy God which he hath given thee.”

It will be recollected that the silence of our Saviour's history is broken at one point, by the story of his visit to the city of his father's faith and worship, and his conversation with the erudite doctors in the temple. This shows at least what the custom was in the families of the devout during all that period.

But it must be admitted that no record whatsoever is furnished of Simon's first feast, and we are left only to the conjecture that the ordinary course of

affairs would allow. We can assume it as a matter of course that his parents did what other parents were accustomed to do. And this helps us very much in ascertaining how full of opportunity these Galilean peasants' lives became, and how favorable for obtaining some knowledge of the world around them.

No one can read the narratives of the Scriptures without noting the exceeding joyousness of these annual pilgrimages across the entire country. They are always mentioned with kindled feeling of exhilaration. The amiable seclusion of the ordinary village life that many of the people lived, broken in upon by these periodic tours; the devotional temper of their minds, given fresh indulgence; the historic patriotism and pride of ancestral memories, stimulated by the sight and realization of so sacred a city as Jerusalem; the social companionship necessary on the stages of their slow travel over hill and valley, when whole towns turned out together on the same pleasant errand; even the matchless beauty of Palestine at the chosen seasons for the various festivals; all these joined to make each recurrence of the journey an exciting anticipation and a long memory.

This explains the presence of so enormous a multitude of men, women, and children, when the people were fed with miraculous loaves and fishes on the shores of Gennesaret; they were doubtless pilgrims going up to the passover. This tells us in respect to the great crowds who cheered and sang when Jesus was riding into Jerusalem, how it happened that they were so enthusiastic and unsophisticated; they were

rural people, just come in from the country, and they let their artless enthusiasm have play. This helps in the proof that Jesus' disciples did not steal his body away the night after the crucifixion; the entire neighborhood was thronged almost to suffocation with strangers.

It would take Jonas and Zebedee—piloting their families on “in the way their fathers trod”—two or three days at the least to reach Jerusalem from their quiet home beside the Sea of Galilee. Most likely their route would be along the valley of the Jordan on the eastern shore a part of the way, in the Greek country called Decapolis. The caravans would cross the stream at the border line of Galilee, so as to escape passing through the regions then rendered unsafe by the jealousy and positive malevolence of the Samaritans. Reaching the ford, in the neighborhood of Bethabara, they might easily pass over into Judæa close by Jericho, and thence climb up by the regular road leading to Bethany and the Mount of Olives.

Those who have gazed upon that city of Jerusalem from the exquisite outlook offered in the tower of the little “Church of the Ascension” on the summit of Olivet, would wish that every one who loves the pathetic old town might catch his earliest glimpse of it from that direction. It is no mere modern custom which leads travelers to pitch their tents on that historic slope. The multitudes of Israelites in all the years thronging the vicinity have recognized the advantages of the spot. So large must have been the num-

bers of pilgrims when all the tribes came up together, that it never was possible to find accommodation for man and beast within the walls. They used to rear for themselves arbors, or booths, made of branches interlaced and covered with loose matting. And some sheltered their families in light tents. All along the slopes of this beautiful hill they established their temporary residences for an enthusiastic week of content and joy. The peace was welcome after the wearying journeys; the April air was full of softness; around them was spread a profusion of flowers and blossoms; singing voices met voices singing on every side; old friends clasped hands in renewal of affection; and, more than all beside, there before the very door lay Jerusalem itself in the reality of its glory!

It is well understood that certain of the psalms, called the "Songs of Degrees," were composed for the use of the people coming up to these festivals. They kept repeating them with music on their journey, and they chanted them together on the temple steps. These helped to enliven their spirits as they plodded along in the sunshine or halted in the shade. But the full reach of their meaning was attained only when the tired families settled upon this final ridge and gazed upon the city of their hope and love.

It seems almost impossible to communicate to another that enthusiasm of delight, and that suffusion of sensibility, with which even in our modern times one is inspired by this outlook. The emotion has no relation to an ordinary excitement of travel; it is an

intense enjoyment peculiar and indescribable. The simple vision awakes one's whole soul, and stirs the very center of his being.

Especially at this season, and in the evening hours; for the passover always occurs at the full of the moon. In that almost supernatural illumination, when the sky is so clear and when the air is so pure as it is in that wonderful climate, the city lies plainly outlined, every tower and balcony and dome. For the brilliancy of the night is nearly the same as that of the day. The roofs and roads, the trees and walls, are fairly silver with the white light.

One may at last resolutely retire to the couch in his comfortable tent, making obsequious apology for closing his eyes on such a landscape those peerless evenings, that he is burdened with poor human fatigue, and exhausted sometimes even to pain. An ineffable hush over all the outside world invites to repose; men and animals are alike still. Even the chattering group of his Arab attendants, whose faces just before he saw ruddy in the red gleam of the camp-fire, are now huddled indistinguishably together under their brown garments, silent in slumber. His eyes may be heavy, but his mind will disdain to rest. Then he will understand what the words mean, "I sleep, but my heart waketh." For the instant the snuffy candle is extinguished, and the passover moonlight streams in through the curtainless doorway—there it all is again! There lingers undiminished that glory of ancient memory and song in serene shining.

Nobody can be tame now. One will say, over and

over, the hundred and twenty-second psalm. He will be sure to "pray for the peace of Jerusalem." He will claim for himself most honestly the promise, "They shall prosper that love thee." Then at the last, if he draws the folds of canvas, and closes out the moonlit spectacle, he will fall asleep, saying softly, even in his dreams :

"Peace be within thy walls, and prosperity within thy palaces. For my brethren and companions' sakes, I will now say, Peace be within thee. Because of the house of the Lord our God, I will seek thy good."

In such feelings, so irresistible even to a chance Christian traveler, we are certain is found an explanation of those inspired verses which, when we read them now, seem almost extravagant. The earliest sight of this town and its sacred edifices—what must it have been to any devout Israelite! No wonder he called Mount Zion his "chief joy." No wonder he lifted his hands to exclaim :

"I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord.

"Our feet shall stand within thy gates, O Jerusalem.

"Jerusalem is builded as a city that is compact together: whither the tribes go up, the tribes of the Lord, unto the testimony of Israel, to give thanks unto the name of the Lord.

"For there are set thrones of judgment, the thrones of the house of David.

"Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth,

is Mount Zion, on the sides of the north, the city of the great King."

And in association it was more lovely still. All the glories of the splendid past, all the hopes of a radiant future, centered there. The history of David's kingdom, and the predictions of Messiah's advent, alike mentioned this matchless Capital. Some of the ancient Rabbins used to say: "He that never saw Jerusalem in its splendor, never saw a beautiful city; and he that never saw the Temple, never saw the noblest fabric under the sun!"

The dispositions of children are molded and the elements of their characters are fixed under pressure of such training as this. Young Simon's imagination would be kindled, his whole future would be swayed, by even a single visit with his parents to that capital of his nation at one of the great feasts. But we are to recollect that the experience was repeated three times a year through all of his opening manhood. One after another of the grand events of the illustrious history would find its rehearsal. Jonas would be sure to point out the objects within stroke of his eye, and connect the Scripture narratives with them for a permanent impression.

For example: that curious structure which every one sees now in the valley of Jehoshaphat, bearing the name of "Absalom's Tomb," may not be, even though many still think it is, the very pillar which this son of David reared "in the King's Dale"; but most authorities are agreed that it was in existence, and that traditions of the people connected it with the

rebel's name, before Herod was dead. No doubt the boy received many an admonition with that forlorn stone for a text, and thus gained his lesson about the wickedness of a disobedient child. He may possibly have read aloud that story of the monarch's flight, when the ingrate pursued him :

“And David said unto all his servants that were with him at Jerusalem, Arise, and let us flee ; for we shall not else escape from Absalom ; make speed to depart, lest he overtake us suddenly, and bring evil upon us, and smite the city with the edge of the sword.

“And all the country wept with a loud voice, and all the people passed over ; the king also himself passed over the brook Kidron, and all the people passed over, toward the way of the wilderness.

“And David went up by the ascent of Mount Olivet, and wept as he went up, and had his head covered, and he went barefoot : and all the people that was with him covered every man his head, and they went up, weeping as they went up.”

Then the actual path of the mourning loyalists could be seen traced white along the hillside, from the eastern gate to the summit where they sat. How strikingly the locality would fix in mind all the incidents of a historic fact like that ! One of the prominent characteristics of Simon Peter's mind was his unusual aptitude for picturesque appreciation. We can readily understand that when he was an imaginative boy, his whole being would be absorbed by an object-lesson so intense, he would actually see the

crownless monarch toiling up the hill, and the sorrowful nobles in his train.

Nor was this the finest sight that old white path would suggest. Perhaps they would set the boy at reading one of the mysterious chapters of Ezekiel's prophecy. He may have been asking questions about the former Temple which once stood on this same sacred spot. Jonas would tell him that the mighty edifice of Solomon had in it five things which this temple lacked. And if Simon asked, in his natural curiosity, what became of the chief one of them, namely, that grand Shechinah light which used to shine upon the mercy-seat, surely this would be the place to give him his exact reply :

“Then the glory of the Lord went up from the cherub, and stood over the threshold of the house; and the house was filled with the cloud, and the court was full of the brightness of the Lord's glory.

“Then the glory of the Lord departed from off the threshold of the house, and stood over the cherubim.

“And the cherubim lifted up their wings, and mounted up from the earth in my sight; when they went out, the wheels also were beside them, and every one stood at the door of the east gate of the Lord's house; and the glory of the God of Israel was over them above.

“Then did the cherubim lift up their wings and the wheels beside them; and the glory of the God of Israel was over them above.

“And the glory of the Lord went up from the

midst of the city, and stood upon the mountain which is on the east side of the city."

Here the saddened Jews found a reason for their shame; for a figure like this could only signify an official and judicial departure of divine favor, because of their unworthiness. A most interesting legend is recorded in one of the Hebrew books, showing what was the popular belief at the time. It is stated that this Shechinah paused for a season on the threshold, as if loath to leave its resting-place between the cherubim, then it paused again near the door of the east gate, as if wishing to be hindered; then at last it took its solemn way silently up the central path until it stood tranquilly gleaming on the ridge of the mountain. There it remained three years and a half, just to see whether the listless nation would be stirred up to repentance. And they said that a plaintive and affectionate voice would ever and anon come forth from the luminous cloud, calling, "Return unto me, O my sons, and I will surely return to you!" Then finally it arose from the ground, and in the graphic language of the record, "went to its own place."

With what sentiments of awe would the young Simon gaze forth upon such scenes! There was the gate; there was the path; there was the mountain! Perforce his mind would be taught and moved forever, as he remembered this prophecy and sat thinking on that hill. At his very feet lay the sward once radiant with illumination from the symbol of his Creator's glory, the mystery of Jehovah's light, passing away from mortal darkness, moving home to its rest!

There is no need of our tracing the story of such a Passover pilgrimage any further. Enough has been said to show how the histories and doctrines of that ancient faith were learned and taught in the experience of Simon, this son of Jonas from Bethsaida.

He would now know how divine justice deals with human guilt, how divine mercy forgives a penitent soul, how divine goodness invariably welcomes a faithful service, how divine promises furnish food in the desert, how divine foresight sees the generations far off. And with this knowledge, what more would this young lad need, as the years passed along, and he remained in his father's routine of daily toil by the sea, to show him what we mean when we say, "God is a spirit, infinite, eternal, and unchangeable in his being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth" ?

Still, this is not all he would need. Something beyond such a mere notion of God's providence is demanded for salvation. Each soul must be made to understand the atonement provided for the redemption of our race from the curse of God's broken law. And this the ceremonies of the great feast itself were intended to teach to all who participated in them. So it becomes a matter of absorbing interest for us to ascertain exactly what the Passover was in that period of history when Simon witnessed its celebration first, and, if possible, to learn what were the lessons he would gain from it.

CHAPTER V.

THE FOURTEENTH OF NISAN.

We have imagined that the family of Jonas came up early in that twelfth year of young Simon's life, and were at Jerusalem in a good time to secure a favorable location upon the usually crowded slope of Mount Olivet. We have pictured their modest tent, with its fine outlook. But it is hardly to be supposed that this lad would remain under cover very much while such stirring events were abroad as the fourteenth day of Nisan was wont to bring to his people in the city of the great King.

Let us understand that the Passover feast was by law fixed on the day which came fourteen days after the new moon of Abib, and the month Abib was made the first of the months, and so became the beginning of the year. The meaning of the word *Abib* is "ears of grain;" and the meaning of the word *Zif*, the name of the month which was reckoned next, is "blossoms." After the Babylonish captivity Abib seems to have yielded to *Nisan* as the term of designation, and so the date of the festival was known as the fourteenth of Nisan. This month very nearly coincided with our April, and Zif with our May; but, being governed by the phases of the moon, there would be some shifting of the periods, putting one year with another, as is the case with our modern dates of Easter or Good Friday. Thus we understand that these scenes of the Passover we are seek-

ing to describe were reproduced each season in the most comfortable and beautiful portion of the year. The nights were warm and dry, the moon was coming up to the full, the journeys were easy, the spring harvests waved in the fields, the blossoms shone, the birds kept singing.

Out there on the hillside stands the wondering Simon. It is not always necessary to think of this boy as in an awkward costume. Children have their holiday dresses in Palestine as elsewhere. And we must seem to see a bright lad in his simple garment of light stuff, the substantial plainness of which is relieved by a high-colored scarf, or perhaps covered with a tunic of silk, his head wearing the small red *fez*, with its graceful tassel of dark fringe. Brisk with the exhilaration of each day's journey, he looks like a mere child of nature, as fresh and elastic as the flowers he treads among, and as free as the innumerable bluebirds which flash in and out through the hedges.

It must not be forgotten that the ceremonies introducing passover days were of such a character as powerfully to arrest the imagination of those simple-minded people who kept the annual feast. As soon as the full moon was announced, the Sanhedrin gave official notice to all the families patiently gathered around the sacred city. A messenger was sent to the Mount of Olives with a bundle of brushwood or straw, which he kindled into flame on the very summit. Meanwhile he flared a torch backwards and forwards through the air to make sure to the watchers on other

hills that this was the true signal for the nation. Immediately, sentinels further away waved along this token of fire, and hurried to pile up heaps of stubble, or whatever was nearest to hand and fittest for a beacon, till the whole country was in a blaze of intelligence. How much a boy of twelve years would like that!

And while the tent stood on the hillside at Jerusalem, there would keep coming in new companies of pilgrims. It was the custom, when it could be afforded, for each caravan to enter Judæa preceded by a great bullock with gilded horns, and accompanied with music of trumpets and cymbals, which they followed with their voices. Hence the figure in the prophecy: "The redeemed of the Lord shall return, and come with singing unto Zion."

We can picture the exhilaration there would be in this. Each hour's delay would awake some small anxiety concerning a belated neighbor. Kept back by rougher roads, or more distant journeys, or possibly by the waning strength of some dear old man who wanted to come just once more, perhaps now and then a family would be behindhand; and then generous friends would be watching. Every new swell of instruments would bring the eager faces to the doors of the booths and tents. So there would be a lively fortnight while the moon was growing from its first thin crescent to its broad full face.

Another thing must be borne in mind, or we shall grow confused. The forms for the celebration of the Passover were authoritatively fixed by the

same command as that which established it. Undoubtedly these were followed with careful fidelity during the period which preceded the great captivity of the nation. As a matter of fact, we have the record of an observance of the feast the second year at Sinai. Then we have no more notice of it until the tribes are at Jericho, actually inside of the land of promise. The Jews themselves insist that this was the meaning of the divine command. Some of the minor arrangements must have been changed before Jesus' time. It is well enough to know, once for all, that it is the spirit and purpose of an ordinance which the Lord honors, not the mere form. When the remnant of the people came up from Babylon and were again settled in Canaan, a new ritual of observances was fashioned for more than one of the yearly festivals. Certain conveniences of method and management in the details of sacrifice were also tolerated, springing up out of the altered habits of the families when the temple was builded, and the tribes came to their rest from conquest.

The ancient annalists enumerate these four particulars as having been dropped when the later customs were adopted. (1) The eating of the lamb in different places—for it must now be killed in the sacred city of Jerusalem only; (2) The taking up of the victim four days previous to the sacrifice—for as the people would now in some cases have to come by long journeys into Judæa, not all of them could gain so much time for waiting; (3) The striking of the blood upon the doorposts of the dwellings—for now,

since the literal plague of Pharaoh was to be repeated no more, the symbol of deliverance from it might be considered as spiritualized; (4) The partaking of the feast in haste—they now adopted the usual posture of sitting or reclining in security and rest. Thus they professed to preserve the spirit of the ordinance while surrendering the form.

The Jews began their days with the evening sunset. Hence, Good Friday of that eventful week when our Lord was crucified, commenced with the ordinary ceremonies of Thursday night. At this time a solemn search was instituted in every dwelling for leaven—what we should recognize better by the common name of yeast. This diligent and punctilious examination went through the whole premises, entering every closet, opening every drawer, looking over every shelf in every cupboard, lest even the slightest particle of the forbidden thing should be missed. One member of the household bore a dish and brush, with which the tables and couches were anxiously swept. All the small dust thus collected was put away under lock and key. Late after midnight—some say in the early forenoon of Friday—a fire was kindled out in the open air, and the dangerous fragments and crumbs of leavened bread were consumed. This custom was instituted in the earliest history of the ordinance: “In the first month, on the fourteenth day of the month at even, ye shall eat unleavened bread, until the one and twentieth day of the month at even. Seven days shall there be no leaven found in your houses: for whosoever eateth

that which is leavened, even that soul shall be cut off from the congregation of Israel, whether he be a stranger, or born in the land. Ye shall eat nothing leavened: in all your habitations shall ye eat unleavened bread. Unleavened bread shall be eaten seven days; and there shall no leavened bread be seen with thee, neither shall there be leaven seen with thee in all thy quarters. Seven days shall ye eat unleavened bread; even the first day ye shall put away leaven out of your houses: for whosoever eateth leavened bread, from the first day until the seventh day, that soul shall be cut off from Israel."

Now what did this ceremony signify? Leaven is a product of fermentation; it is made by a sort of corruption; and always, if continuing to work, it grows foul. Hence it was long ago chosen as the symbol of sin—corruption or wickedness of any kind or degree. To put away leaven was, under a figure, to put away sin. Hence Paul's language both explains the type and applies the principle: "A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump. Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us: therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth."

The Jewish doctors prescribed four degrees of preparation in this process. The first was what was called the *expurgatio fermenti*—the patient cleansing of all their household utensils, two or three days before the

Passover. Then the *inquisitio fermenti*—the searching after leaven throughout the dwelling, of which we already have spoken. Next came the *conflagratio fermenti*—the burning up of the leaven they had gathered. Then the *exccratio fermenti*—the cursing of the leaven; a sort of exorcism, the form of which was prescribed, and ran somewhat on this wise:

“All manner of ferment, whether seen of me or not seen—all manner of ferment, whether cleansed of me or not cleansed—let it be scattered, annulled, and accounted as the dust of the earth!”

The search for this accursed symbol of sin must be made with a lighted candle and in solemn silence by the head of the house. The Jewish expositors are accustomed to say that this is the meaning of the Lord's searching Jerusalem “with candles” for wicked men “settled on their lees,” or, as the margin reads, “curded or thickened.”

At last the Passover day arrived; and it is easy to see how a mind picturesque and imaginative, like Simon's, would be by this time all aroused and quickened into curiosity. About two o'clock, the trumpets in the temple and along the steps sounded a great, magnificent blast, ringing from a thousand brazen mouths. All around instantly came the answering peals from tent and booth and dwelling, as the stalwart men of Galilee and Judæa made the air quiver with their horns—as it were, the nation sending back the reply to their leaders, who summoned them to come unto God's service.

Now every father of a family started for the temple enclosure, bearing a lamb in his arms. The vast multitudes poured along down from the hillsides, out of the houses, hurrying through the street. Four thousand or more of the Levites came out on the steps of that wonderful edifice, and commenced singing the Songs of Degrees, in solemn and joyful strains of male voices, making the wide valley of Jehoshaphat echo with music, while the throngs on throngs hurried in. Think of an enthusiastic Jewish boy out on the Mount of Olives, looking off over an innumerable sea of heads like this! How the procession would fill his whole soul with wonder! How the psalms would rise and swell on his ear across the valley!

For this night the evening service came on a little earlier than usual, for there was so much to be done. Three mighty blasts of the silver trumpets announced its conclusion; and then the gates were barred against all entrance into the court of the priests while the work of killing the sacrificial victims took place. Each head of a family slew the animal he brought, cutting off the fat, which he gave to the officiating minister to burn after his departure.

When any one division of the people had completed its prescribed work, it yielded place to another; so the stream of men poured out again to their homes, whether located inside the city walls, or temporarily planted in the outskirts. And still that exhilarating song on the steps went on; the Levites continued singing the Great Hallel—the psalms numbered in our Bibles from the hundred and thirteenth

to the hundred and eighteenth—and the sound of such cultivated voices in chorus must have been surpassingly full of sublimity and inspiration.

We must arrest the progress of our description here, and reserve for a new chapter the ceremonies of the Passover feast itself. Let us note, just now, the interesting coincidences of dates. A late English writer has been at some pains to collate passages of Scripture, and he concludes that the day of our Saviour's crucifixion was the anniversary, not only of the Exodus, but also of the promise to Abraham; the day of the resurrection was the anniversary of the crossing of the Red Sea, and of the resting of the Ark on Mount Ararat; Nisan, once the seventh of the twelve months, became the first month of the year; the seventeenth of Nisan marks the emergence of the renewed earth out of the waters of the Flood, the march of God's redeemed people from the waves of the sea, and the rising of Jesus from the dead.

It is not easy to say how much in detail this young son of Jonas may have acquired of knowledge concerning the grand anticipation and longing of his race for their Coming King. He certainly did not know the deep meaning of many of the symbols of atonement he saw that day, as we understand them now. It is pathetic to think how unconsciously he and his parents, and indeed his whole nation, passed the hours away, without having a single notion of what Mary had kept secret; that, behind him in Nazareth, in his mother's arms, lay the true Paschal Lamb, the world's Messiah, King David the Second.

CHAPTER VI.

SIMON'S FIRST PASSOVER.

The forms employed in the celebration of the Passover are almost unchanged even in our day. Three thousand years already have passed away; and still the habits of those strange people who to-day represent the nation once chosen of God remain very much the same. No lamb has ever been sacrificed since the temple in Jerusalem was destroyed; but the instructions issued in the modern manuals of service suggest almost everything which used to be practised among the Jews in the middle ages, and even back as far as the time of our Lord. As to the decoration of the table on the morning of the fourteenth of Nisan, the following particulars have been prescribed for the faithful:

“For the first two nights of the feast, the rules require that three plates shall be placed on the table after the cloth is laid, in one of which three unleavened cakes shall be placed, in another the long bone of the shoulder of the lamb and an egg (both roasted on coals), in the third some lettuce and celery, or chervil and parsley; a cup of vinegar or salt water; and, finally, a compound of apples, almonds, etc., worked up to the consistence of mortar.

“Before each partaker of the passover is placed a glass or cup of wine, it being obligatory to drink four glasses of wine in commemoration of the four different expressions made use of in describing Israel's re-

demption from Egypt, viz., 'And I brought out,' 'and I delivered,' 'and I redeemed,' 'and I took.'"

A side note just here says: "On these nights it is customary to allow even the lowest Hebrew servant to sit at table during the ceremonial part; for, *as we were all equally alike in bondage, it is proper that we all return thanks to God for the redemption.*"

All this is interesting, surely; but the main need for us in our present story of Simon Peter is to ascertain precisely what he would be likely to see on the first celebration of this feast that he ever attended. A curious liturgy has come down through the ages, quite unaltered; one which the Rabbins were wont to use at the time when our Saviour was born; it is likely that this was the form of celebration when the Bethsaida family arrived in the Holy City, bringing this lad with them. It will of itself bear rehearsing in detail for its mere picturesqueness; but it will serve also to show how such boys learned of Christ.

In our last chapter, we left Jonas among the reverent but packed crowd who were struggling in the temple-court where they had just killed their lambs, seeking his egress that he might join his circle of relatives for the devotional meal. As expeditiously now as possible, this paschal victim was brought in by the father of the household, and immediately placed (as was the custom) in a heated hole previously dug in the ground to receive it—a sort of oven in which a fire had been kindled. A spit of pomegranate wood was passed through it from one end to the other, and a second one of shorter length was also

thrust across from shoulder to shoulder. Thus the lamb would hang free over the coals till it was roasted for the eating. All the guests now put on their most beautiful garments, and the brightest lamps in the house were lit.

When all things were ready for the table, and the company were reverently assembled, the attitude was assumed which most strikingly illustrated the changed condition of the people. The company did not stand with their loins girded for marching, but reclined on long couches; the head towards the feast, the feet turned away from it. So we understand at once how the penitent woman at Simon's banquet could stand "behind" Jesus at his feet. This was the customary posture in eating; and it was particularly prescribed for the Lord's Supper, in order to show that Israel was now at peace and rest. The Talmud commands this: "Because it is the manner of slaves to eat standing, therefore now they eat sitting and leaning as free men do, in memorial of their freedom." Indeed, it was forbidden to partake of the paschal lamb otherwise: "No, not the poorest in Israel may eat till he has sat down, leaning." The left elbow was placed on the table, and the head might rest upon that hand, thus intimate companions being neighbors on the couch might seem almost to be leaning on each other's bosom, or lying on each other's breast, as "the disciple whom Jesus loved" has related.

Then the official head of the household, or, at his invitation, the most eminent personage of the company

present, lifting a cup of wine in his hand, began the ceremonies of the occasion with this joyous ascription of praise :

“ Blessed be thou, O Lord our God, the King of the universe, who hast created the fruit of the vine ! Blessed art thou, Jehovah our God, who hast chosen us from among all people, and exalted us from among all languages, and sanctified us with thy commandments ! Blessed art thou, O Lord our God, the King of the universe, who hast preserved us alive and sustained us, and brought us to this season ! ”

The first cup of wine was then tasted by him, and afterwards all who were present followed his example. This was called the blessing of the wine. Some think it was precisely this which our divine Saviour did in the institution of the Lord's Supper, when “ he took the cup and gave thanks, and said, Take this and divide it among yourselves.”

At the very beginning of the meal, water was brought in that all the guests might wash their hands. Then the master of ceremonies rising offered a prayer of general thanksgiving in these words :

“ Blessed be thou, O Lord our God, who hast sanctified us by thy commandments, and hast commanded us concerning this washing of our hands ! Yea, thou hast chosen us above all nations. Thou hast given us thy holy festivals with joy and rejoicing ! ”

Just here comes in the incident of our Lord's washing his disciples' feet. The expression, “ supper being ended,” is quite faulty as a rendering ; it should

be, "supper being on, or proceeding." No doubt our Saviour performed this menial act to teach the lesson of a profound humility, and at the same moment to show the significance of the symbol. It was as if he would say to his followers, "Be willing to stoop to any lowness of service to cleanse men's souls from sin."

Then next to this, in the formula for the Passover, a small table was spread, having on it some bitter herbs and unleavened bread, with also a dish containing a peculiar mixture composed of wine and fruit-cake, raisins and dates, worked into a sort of palatable sauce. At this moment likewise was brought in the body of the paschal lamb. The unleavened bread was merely a pile of thin wafers of the most meagre kind, mere cakes made out of flour and water, and pierced with holes in order that no possible fermentation could take place even in the swift process of baking they passed through. Then the master of ceremonies, rising, offered a brief prayer of general invocation, after which each of the company took of the bitter herbs a moderate portion; this, dipping it in the sweet sauce as a sop, he ate, no guest being permitted to eat less than the size of an olive. Then the whole table was suddenly carried out of the room, and a plain cup of wine and water was set before the master and everyone at the service; but of this for some little pause of time no one in the company was expected to taste. The object of such strange silence and mystery of delay seems to have been to pique the curiosity of younger members of the household,

and invite them to ask what was the reason of it. It was a suggestion made by the words of Moses in the original institution of the festival: "And it shall come to pass, when your children shall say unto you, What mean ye by this service? that ye shall say, It is the sacrifice of the Lord's Passover, who passed over the houses of the children of Israel in Egypt, when he smote the Egyptians, and delivered our houses."

Hence, at this point in the administration, a young lad—usually the son of the master—came forward and put the question:

"What do ye mean by such a service as this?"

Now it does not seem any unusual stretch of our imagination in this recital to suppose that the lad who performed this office, on the occasion we have been studying, was Simon himself. For who would be likelier than he, this bright boy in his gay garments and with his inquisitive look? And it aids very much in our inquiries as to the processes of his religious education to find that he had such matchless opportunities of learning what he needed to know.

A second cup of wine was now poured out, and then this same lad pressed for a somewhat more extensive explanation of the feast:

"What mean ye by this service? Wherefore is this night distinguished from all other nights; in what does it differ thus? For on all other nights we wash but once, this night twice; on all other nights we eat bread leavened or unleavened, this night unleavened only; on all other nights we eat flesh

roasted or baked or boiled, this night roasted only ; on all other nights we eat of any herbs, this night of bitter herbs only ; on all other nights we either recline or sit while we eat, this night we recline only."

The father of the household then gravely arose and delivered an address. He rehearsed the history of Israel, showing God's deliverances in the nation's times of peril, especially dwelling upon the events of the Exodus, the wonders wrought in Egypt, and the destruction of Pharaoh. If there were many boys and girls present, the speaker invariably added something like a direct admonition suited to their understanding :

"Children, we were all servants, like this maid-servant, or like this man-servant, that waiteth ; and on this night, many years ago, the Lord redeemed us and brought to us liberty from our bondage."

Then the table was brought back into the chamber once more, and a second cup of wine was poured out. The president of the feast, holding up the roasted lamb, continued his discourse : "This is the Passover which we eat in respect that the Lord passed over the houses of our fathers in the land of Egypt." In like manner he held up the horehound, the wild lettuce, and the coriander ; the use of these he explained also : "These are the bitter herbs which we eat in remembrance that the Egyptians made the lives of our fathers bitter in bondage." When the unleavened bread was reached, he dwelt upon the necessity that each one should try to make the reminiscence personal and religious : "This is the un-

leavened bread which we eat in remembrance that our fathers' dough had not had time to be leavened before the Lord showed himself for their redemption from the hand of the enemy."

This discourse ended—and it certainly shows just where our Saviour might introduce his lengthened forms of address which the beloved disciple records—the whole company entered into a united form of thanksgiving: "Therefore are we bound to confess, to praise, to adore, to glorify, to extol, to honor, to bless, to exalt, to reverence Him who for our forefathers and for us wrought all these miracles, for he brought us forth from bondage into freedom. He changed our sorrow into joy, our mourning into a feast. He led us out of darkness into a great light, and from servitude to redemption. Let us sing therefore in his presence, Hallelujah, praise ye the Lord!"

Then the first part of the Great Hallel was sung, Psalms hundred and thirteenth and fourteenth. At this time, also, they drank the second cup of wine, and the master carefully washed his hands again. It is well to distinguish these cups of wine, and keep their order in mind. The Talmud prescribed that there should be four of them at least, even if the man should "receive the money from the box for the poor." It was added that if anyone could not obtain the wine otherwise "he must sell or pawn his coat or hire himself out for these four cups." With what propriety does the papal church deny wine to the laity?

Now, taking a cake of the unleavened bread, the presiding leader broke it in pieces, saying at the

same time the form which was called "the blessing" of the bread: "Blessed be thou, O Lord our God, the king of the universe, who bringest forth fruit from the earth!" He then gave to each person a fragment to eat. This any one could dip, if he desired, in the vessel of sauce before him. While they were eating, the master said: "This is the bread of affliction which our fathers did eat in the land of Egypt." This will easily be recognized as the point in the service at which our Lord gave the "sop" to Judas. This traitor, therefore, did not partake of the paschal lamb; he went immediately out.

Then came the eating of the Passover. The festival might be kept up till within an hour of midnight; then by rule it must end. The lamb was carved so as not to divide a joint or break a bone. It was expected that the company would be so constructed as to consume the whole. Ten persons might be grouped around one table; sometimes there were twenty. Whatever was left must be burned that same night.

Immediately after this, the third cup was offered. Here, if at any point in particular, the Passover glided wholly over into the Lord's Supper. For this in all the Jewish ritual was called, as Paul calls it, "the cup of blessing." A special benediction was invoked upon it. The Talmud exalts it as in ten particulars the chief cup of the feast. And to this day, in every Israelitish dwelling, when this third cup has been drunk, the door is flung wide open to admit Elijah as the Messiah's forerunner and herald.

Now came a lengthy prayer and ascription of praise. Then the remainder of the Hallel was sung: Psalms hundred and fifteenth to eighteenth; and the feast concluded with a fourth and final cup. It is likely that this was the "hymn" at the Lord's Supper. And if the conjecture be correct, that Jesus meant to give his feast a forward reach by omitting the closing cup till he should meet all his people in the "kingdom of God," then this was the point where the intercessory prayer was delivered, and the solemn departure to Gethsemane begun.

It is worthy of note, just here, that in reciting this portion of the Hallel, the Jews always repeat those words applied with such force by Christ to himself in connection with his parable of the wicked husbandman: "The stone which the builders refused is become the head stone of the corner. This is the Lord's doing; it is marvelous in our eyes."

For the first evening there is arranged a rehearsal of the "abundant miracles" that God has performed in the night. Such instances are cited as that Abraham conquered when he divided his company at night, Israel wrestled and overcame at night, the Syrian was terrified in the dead of the night, Daniel was delivered from the lions at night, etc. These instances are arranged in seven groups, each of which is introduced by the set form of sentence: "And it came to pass at midnight."

A similar recitative is prepared with reference to the mighty power displayed by God at the passover, each section of which has the introductory sentence,

“And ye shall say, This is the sacrifice of the passover.” Among the miracles mentioned as occurring in connection with this feast, are, that God appeared to Abraham in the heat of the day at that time; that then the patriarch fed the angels with unleavened cakes; that the inhabitants of Sodom were destroyed at the passover; Lot was delivered, who baked unleavened cakes for the passover; Midian was destroyed by the cake of barley bread, like the offering of an omer of barley in the passover; Haman was executed at the passover, etc.

A prayer for the rebuilding of Jerusalem concludes the service, after which it is declared that the passover is now accomplished, according to its order, formalities, and customs, the declaration ending with an ejaculatory appeal to God to hasten to lead the redeemed to Zion.

Can it not be seen now, from this rehearsal, that the young children, and especially this boy Simon—if it be true, as we imagined, that he took part in the service—would gain a lesson never to be forgotten upon these passover days? It was all one great splendid parable. It told him of the Messiah, who was the Paschal Lamb, not for Israel only, but for all humankind.

We sometimes ask how much the ancient people of God knew concerning the gospel, as it was afterwards more fully exhibited when Jesus came. It is evident that they saw the Saviour in the types. And here particularly, every one could have said with the apostle, “For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us.”

CHAPTER VII.

JUDAS THE GAULONITE.

“Nothing falsifies history more than logic,” says Guizot; “when the mind rests on one idea, it draws all possible consequences, and makes it produce all that it could produce; then it represents it in history with all this attendance. But it is not so that the world moves. Events are not so quick in their deductions as the human mind is in the deductions it makes.”

Here, now, we are trying to show, if we can, how much the fashioning of Simon Peter's character is due to the political and moral events of those years through which he passed in his youth and opening manhood. We may be in error all the time; we may imagine him a thoughtful and stirring patriot, or we might simply class him among the dull fishermen who plied the same trade, and left the world to run on in its grooves as best it could. It is hard, however, to think of him as tame or unobservant, and harder still as torpid and plodding, while great purposes were rising and falling around him, full of excitement.

There were certainly two important facts which swept out into his range of vision about this period of his life. The nation, for one thing, was agitated by the tidings of the death of the king himself. This event must have created a profound impression among the Bethsaida people, because it took place within

reach of their particular range; details came to them easily.

Such a catastrophe had been anticipated; for it was known in all the region that Herod had been smitten with an awful and incurable disease. He was eaten by worms, ulcerated and foul with indescribable soreness and loathsome corruption. A series of lonely journeys for relief had been commenced, but with no success.

Near Bethlehem, even to the present day, is pointed out a singular conical hill, called the "Frank Mountain." On its summit, many years before, this monarch had builded a royal palace. There he had slept, while—all unconsciously to him—the true Prince of the House of David had been born just below him, and almost under the sweep of his outlook, in the manger of an inn. But now Herod, with a mind full of murder and a body full of pain, could only find in its splendor food for remorse. Visions of coming retribution filled his nights with dreams till he cried out in fright.

Indeed, there was enough to torment him before his time, already recorded in the dreadful chapters of his biography. Perhaps no man ever lived, whose name has come down to us through the ages, who was the actual embodiment of more of the execrable attributes of our vilest human nature than was this man Herod—whom a matchless sarcasm has sometimes called "The Great."

He lived in an atmosphere of murder. The Bethlehem infants were by no means his chief victims.

Priests had died under his imperial mandate for no other crime than being in his way. Nobles openly accused of nothing had been beheaded in his passion of jealousy. Aristobulus, his brother-in-law, had been drowned, and the wickedness of such a wrong passed off as a joke. He slew three of his own sons, his uncle, his wife's mother, her father, and her uncle. He never loved but one being, Mariamne; of her he grew repeatedly suspicious, and at last in a burst of wrath commanded her death by strangulation. He was thus treacherous to all his confidants and friends. He exercised his diabolical ingenuity in the invention of new modes and fresh forms of execution, and tested each by a sort of experiment on those who stood next to him. Assassinations were his daily indulgence. Some victims he caused to be cut in two, some he burned, some he suffocated, some he tortured.

Two notable sayings are recorded concerning his life, as graphic as they are terrible. Some messengers were sent in desperate straits to make complaint to the Emperor. These declared that the condition of things in Palestine was intolerable. They reported a panic of fear everywhere. No one knew whose turn would come next. They said that the citizens were kept in such apprehension "that the survivors were more wretched than the sufferers." And it is averred that the reply of Augustus was this: "It seems to be better that one should be Herod's pig than his son." It is probable that he meant by this to intimate that a pig was the safer of the two, be-

cause Herod, being a very devout Jew meanwhile, would not touch a swine, while he could kill his children with a relish.

Now, in anticipation of the death of this monster, the whole province was convulsed with tidings of revolts among the oppressed people. Two famous teachers of the law, in some explosion of frantic zeal, tore away the large eagle of gold which Herod had placed over the gate of the temple. They were immediately caught, and in company with forty adherents were burned alive at Jerusalem.

At last the end came. Herod appears to have been almost maddened by his sufferings, combined with his alarm at immediate retribution. He made one more effort for relief; across the Dead Sea he sought the hot springs of Callirrhœe. Meanwhile he kept speaking to Mariamne as if she were yet alive; he forced his attendants to talk about her as still living. Haunted by the spectres of the relatives he had slain, he broke out often into exclamations of anguish and mortal fright. He was inwardly burning with a continual fever, yet he could take no water for his thirst. He could not even lie down, because of a shortness of breath. Spasms racked his whole body, already sore beyond endurance. Josephus appears to be almost elate, and is certainly picturesque, in his descriptions.

The warm baths did the king no good. Physicians ordered his whole person to be fomented with oil; they let him down into a vessel of that fluid, but on the instant his eyes became relaxed, and he fell

back suddenly, as if he were dead. He revived under their cries for help, but from that time he despaired of recovery. Then he pretended he was going back to Jerusalem, but turned aside into Jericho, oppressed with the deepest melancholy. But his heart was foul with the purpose of another crime, atrocious as ever.

Assembling the men of distinction from all the Judæan villages, he thrust them under guard in the Hippodrome. These he pledged his sister Salome and her husband Alexas to put to death immediately, when he should expire. He declared his purpose in this terrible slaughter to be to make every house in Judæa weep over him.

So now, in his splendid palace by the Jordan, built under the shade in the City of Palms, Herod the Great lay dying. He had only six more days to live. But even that afforded space for a suicide. Calling for a knife to slice an apple, he suddenly sought a quicker death by stabbing himself, but his cousin saved his life.

Still there remained time for another murder. His son Antipater was in prison. Spitefully imagining he would be glad to take the kingdom, this inhuman father sent command that he be instantly dispatched by spearmen. This assassination appears to have been a success.

A few hours before he drew his last breath, Salome ran out among the soldiers to order the release of the citizens confined in the Hippodrome, saying the king had changed his mind.

No: Herod had not changed his mind, but he had changed worlds. After seventy years of triumph in lust, villainy, and murder, this prince of tyrants went forth alone to meet his future and his God.

Such events as these would rush easily up the Jordan valley, and reach the ears of Galilean peasants. We must understand that not only the luxurious nobles, whose barges of pleasure, with great white sails of splendor shining, swept out of the port at Tiberias upon the lake of Gennesaret, but the humble fishermen, also, whose modest boats brought them food for daily life from the same waters, would hear and be moved by such news. Revolutions now seemed just on ahead. Favorites were trembling in their places. Corrupt officers of the government might soon expect to be brought to account. The nation, oppressed beyond endurance, would certainly be incited into risings against rulers, perhaps Roman and Jewish alike.

The presage was true. Forth from Gaulonitis—the region in the rear of Gennesaret—came Judas, heading a wild insurrection, and setting the whole northern country in an uproar. That was a second great event within Simon Peter's range. This is that Judas to whose adventures Gamaliel alluded in his speech, when the apostles were arraigned before the council. He mentioned a malcontent by the name of Theudas, who came to nothing; and then added, "After this man rose up Judas of Galilee, in the days of the taxing, and drew away much people after him; he also perished; and all, even as many as obeyed him, were dispersed."

Gamaliel called him "Judas of Galilee," because his military exploits were performed in Galilee. There, also, was the scene of his devastation and final subjection. But the man originated among the mountains of Golan or Gaulonitis, the land of a resolute and hardy race, forth from which great leaders came now and then along the ages; men like Elijah the Tishbite, like Jephthah the Gileadite; full of force, but not always actuated by the best purpose.

Simon, son of Jonas, was getting along in life now, growing old enough to think. And we need to know, when we find strong elements in his character hereafter, that there were tempestuous periods of history when he acquired them. Many mistakes may be made about Jesus' disciples, by those who imagine they were a tranquilly educated group of rustics, outside of the world for forty years.

It is difficult to ascertain just where this Judas ought to be registered. The name of Judas always arouses unusual sensation. It has a curious history, and brings with it mixed associations to our minds. Judas Maccabeus—that was a name full of valor heroic and heroism unavailing. Judas from Kerioth—that is a name crowded with treason and shame of suicide. Judas, the brother of James—called, in one pathetic parenthesis, "not Iscariot"—that name is full of fidelity and honor, borne by a true disciple.

It seems almost impossible to find out the real facts of history in those troublous times. There is always in every disturbed country a class of men whose patriotism needs to be studied. They like peace

when money can be made by it. They are sure to be calm whenever others endure the weight of oppressions. Any existing order of things is accepted cheerfully, if it offers places for such industry in office as they feel they can supply. With such people Galilee was crowded for many years after Herod's decease. Indeed, the great sufferings of the Jews did not come from the Romans; for the tribute demanded was not always excessive for frugal people.

But men of their own nation accepted the position of tax-collectors. This was unpopular, and the creatures were hated cordially. The offices were sought for gain, and used for extortion, so that fresh levies only afforded new opportunities for renegade Israelites to cheat their neighbors, and grow rich out of what they pretended they transmitted to Rome. Hence the places were sold at convenience, and the revenues were vitiated by bribes. Publicans, as they were called, were dissolute and profligate in social life; yet no one dared offend them. The posture of affairs became finally unbearable. The priesthood yielded to the pressure, and interposed no defences for the oppressed. They preached peace, and set out to make money like the rest. Lawlessness prevailed everywhere. Entire districts were overrun with robbers and organized banditti.

Whether this Gaulonite Judas was a true patriot—or whether he was what in one of our modern languages is called a 'malignant', and in another an 'irreconcilable'; or whether he was simply an ordinary freebooter from the hills, or whether he was a

religious zealot inflamed by enthusiasm of Pharisee piety, cannot be stated. The annals of Josephus are not trustworthy, though perhaps we are compelled to admit they are the best we have. This man is an enigma himself, for he was a parasite and an intriguer. Now on the patriot side, and now with the oppressors, Josephus was, in a single sense, the Talleyrand of his times. He managed to remain in favor with all those dynasties through the risings and fallings of which he passed. Such a career put him on a constant defence. His history is always forced. He crowds in much and omits more.

The best account of Judas is found in one of Origen's Homilies. It appears that he had been a brigand chief and an outlaw in previous times. Now he came forth in the character of a patriotic deliverer of his nation from the sway of foreigners. To this some say he added a religious cast, declaring that he took the sword for the purity of the church as well as the freedom of the land. He claimed the severest austerity in morals, the most rigid performance of duty, the loftiest zeal of a true defender of the faith. Much aid was brought to his cause by the association with him of a Pharisee called Sadoc. The insurgents avowed as their aim nothing short of a re-establishment of the Jewish theocracy, and hence disowned every form of government which did not come directly from high heaven. They chose as their war-cry one of the watchwords of the Maccabees, which so thrilled the people: "We have no Lord nor Master but God."

It is said that the eloquence of this Judas was electric. A vast number of excited men rallied around his standard, won by the magic of his voice. Some went so far as to proclaim him as the expected Messiah, foretold by the prophets, and now made manifest in the flesh. The occasion of a new tax gave him a violent theme for harangues, and was announced as the signal for hostilities. He declared against all rendering of tribute to Rome as a slavery and a shame. Calling upon the people to rise in arms for resistance, he swept through Galilee like lightning and flame. That entire northern country was given over for a while to the horde of depredators which followed him. They tore away the vines from their trellisses, and stamped the corn-fields under foot. They sacked the cities in sheer recklessness of ruin, and destroyed the towns of those quiet peasants who refused to join them. Local forces were at the first unequal to cope with them; and, during months of dismay, these wild outlaws ravaged the province, leaving desolation in their train.

It can readily be conjectured what impressions these tumults would produce on a simple hamlet of fishermen like Bethsaida, innocently caught in the exact center of the frays. If Simon had been a half-dozen years older, we may be sure he would have been found brandishing some sort of sword in the ranks of Judas. For in that movement there was just enough mixture of right and wrong to bewilder a man so impulsive in either direction as he was. For here at the outset was the Hope of the world, pos-

sibly the Messiah in person; here was a champion for the poor; here was a patriot, stern as fate, and apparently incorruptible. It is in evidence that Judas communicated his fiery temper to his adherents. They were occasionally defeated in skirmishes; some were caught and put to cruel torture of rack and cross; but not one was known to quail.

The destruction went on. The bands of marauders made havoc specially in the temples which the pagan idolaters had builded and in which they conducted their heathen rites. Battle after battle thinned their numbers; but still the volunteers increased. Wounded and dying soldiers were brought into the villages along the borders of Lake Gennesaret. Humane efforts were needed to succor or to bury them. Zeb-edee and Jonas, perhaps Salome and Johanna, may have been summoned to minister help. Simon was near twenty years of age. He must have known and pondered these things by himself.

But there could be only one end to this contest. It was unequal from the beginning, and must close in blood. The Roman military organization was too much for these undisciplined enthusiasts. One tremendous engagement, which filled the neighborhood with wailing, brought ultimate defeat. Judas was slain; and Cyrenius, sent for his subjection, triumphed easily over the scattered zealots.

But it was half a century before the traces of this outbreak were erased. A party continued to raise the standard of this lost cause. Two sons of Judas, named James and John, started the insurrection

afresh many years later; they were arrested and crucified. Then, a score of years after that, another son took up the standard. He assumed the style of a king, and committed enormities. But the authorities soon overcame his weak defences, and he went the melancholy way of the rest of his family; he was tortured to death.

CHAPTER VIII.

TWENTY TROUBLED YEARS.

Just note this: the revolt of Judas the Gaulonite occurred not far from what we call A. D. 6. From that date to A. D. 26, not one word is found anywhere to give us help in Simon Peter's biography. Yet was the man growing towards his work.

Perhaps it is this very vagueness of those unchronicled twenty years which piques our curiosity so much. That simple Gennesaret life seems fascinating, and our interest kindles the more in any circumstances of it which do come to light, somewhat in proportion to their rareness. A strong conviction fastens itself in our minds that Simon's character, as we afterwards learn it, is the result—a sort of embodiment—of the times in which he began to exist, to grow and to think. In one sense, he interprets his age.

We find Peter impulsive, irregular, and uncertain. And this much is plain: that these periods of Hebrew history, lying between Jesus' visit to Jerusalem at the age of twelve, and his appearance on the banks of the Jordan at thirty, were the fitfullest and most turbulent in moral vicissitudes that Palestine ever knew.

Politically, the Jewish nation was as badly off as could be. The kingdom of Judah was subdued, local government was denied, the Romans ruled the land. Josephus gives this testimony: he says there were "ten thousand disorders in Judæa;" he adds, that the country was "full of robberies;" he gives his

deliberate estimate of the general misery, that, "at no time of their history, not even after their return from exile, had the nation been more wretched."

Socially, the foundations were broken up. License was rampant over the province. Theft was unrebuked. The Bedouin lost his pre-eminence as a freebooter and brigand. Rascality rode in a gilded chariot, and levied unreckoned taxes. Conscience was dead. A cynical paganism laughed at the devotees that came to the prurient shrines for real comfort in trouble. Philosophy had no word of information to give. Lust wrote records and sang songs that in an age like ours it is just as well decent people should not quote.

Religiously, matters went from bad to worse. Even the high priesthood could be so shifted from man to man, through all those disturbed years before and after this, that a common believer was to be pardoned if he "wist not" who happened, for the moment, to be in the place of the Lord's anointed. The Great Court was prostrate in venal subservience to tetrarchs and proconsuls, who with manipulation of the sects could render the Sanhedrin a sham. None thought of a reformation of manners; for thought was bewildered in the public mind, when bad men did all the thinking. Humanity, as it was at that period, has been compared to old eyeless Orion, trying to grope his way to the abode of the sun. And certainly there was one particular of resemblance—its only guide was a stumbling messenger from the midst of infernal fire.

Three sects of the Jews then wrestled with each other for supremacy—the Pharisees, the Sadducees,

and the Essenes. Of these last no mention is made in the Scriptures. They were a sort of ascetic sect, occupying a position between the other two; retreating into solitudes, claiming special endowments, holding their possessions in common, wielding a power in either direction; but they did not often come alongside of the line of Christian instruction, nor of rebuke. So they never appear in the New Testament.

The Sadducees were a sect which embraced most of the skeptical cavilers of that time. It required some ability and education to hold a position among them, for their opinions were tenuous and subtle. They rejected all doctrines of immortality, and of course denied the sanctions of divine rewards and punishments. They professed to believe men had no souls; they declared there were no angels in this world or out of it. Those passages of the Old Testament which speak of celestial beings they forced out of meaning by a kind of process resembling modern rationalism.

The Pharisees composed the great body of the people. Founders of this ancient sect became strongly tintured in their tenets with Persian orientalism, while their system was in process of formation during the Babylonish captivity. Their doctrinal belief assumed the Bible to be the source of all knowledge of God, but they grafted innumerable traditions upon its precepts. Hence they frequently obscured its plain meaning, and sometimes contradicted it.

Even this slight analysis of those creeds will explain exactly why we hear more of the Pharisees in

the gospel history and of the Sadducees in the apostolic. Christ himself preached piety and morality, laying stress on practical duties. So it could not fail to be that he should attack the sleek self-satisfaction and formal routine of these hypocrites, who wasted so much of their time upon making clean the outside of the cup and platter, while within they were full of extortion and excess. But it became necessary, just a few years later, to lay the foundations of a proper theology for an increasing church. The apostles had need to preach doctrines, and in particular the one new and extraordinary doctrine of the resurrection of the body from the dead, and the life everlasting. This was an abrupt and uncompromising attack upon the tenets of the Sadducees. So our Lord offended the Pharisees by denouncing their ineffable meanness and falsehood ; and the apostles offended the Sadducees by denouncing their wretched free-thinking and unbelief.

Leaving the Essenes out of sight, therefore, it is evident enough that the two great characteristics of the age were formalism and infidelity. Speculative doubt made the Sadducee a trivial censor of others, with no faith of his own, a light-hearted, frivolous sensualist, with a supercilious contempt for those who were not advanced thinkers, as he comfortably asserted Sadducees must always be understood to be. And spiritual pride of orthodoxy rendered the Pharisee a hard aristocrat among men and a noisome hypocrite with God. He magnified the letter and lost the spirit ; and this was an evil result all the more

fatal, because it happened that Pharisees had added to what they called the letter some coarser compositions of their own. Personal religion more absolutely dead never existed. The very name is the symbol of a dreary sanctimoniousness.

So the picture of Simon's life from the time he entered that twenty-years' toil as a fisherman, to the day when he emerged from his obscurity at forty years, down by the Jordan, is not happy. The Arabs of to-day are accustomed to say in the East, when any one starts out on a journey with no particular destination, or without being told whither he is bound, "He is going towards God's gate." That bewildered Jewish nation was going whither it knew not—that was perfectly clear then. And it is perfectly clear now that the race of man was unconsciously on the same transit, going directly towards the door of God's mercy, soon to open for the King coming in his beauty, and the land he was coming to was not very far off.

Yet still there was a remnant. That brings us to one of the finest disclosures of the New Testament. The omniscient God never has left himself without a witness on the earth. Scattered around among the towns and villages there were to be found many spiritual believers like Nathanael, Israelites indeed, in whom was no guile.

Most of us will remember that old Jerusalem Jew who came into the Temple at the presentation of Jesus, and took up the infant child in his arms, blessing God for having shown him his salvation.

“And behold there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon ; and the same man was just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel : and the Holy Ghost was upon him. And it was revealed unto him by the Holy Ghost that he should not see death before he had seen the Lord’s Christ.”

This good man is here called a “devout” disciple. That is a word which is exceedingly significant, wherever we meet it in inspired history ; it marks a class of saints very acceptable to God.

“And there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven.”

“And devout men carried Stephen to his burial, and made great lamentation over him.”

The term is explained in the case of Cornelius the Roman centurion :

“There was a certain man in Cæsarea called Cornelius, a centurion of the band called the Italian band, a devout man, and one that feared God with all his house, which gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God alway.”

The reference seems to be to those who were looking and waiting for the promised Messiah, and who readily received him when he came. Of these, Simeon was one ; and we reverently recall another.

“And there was one Anna, a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Aser ; she was of a great age, and had lived with an husband seven years from her virginity ; and she was a widow of about fourscore and four years, which departed not from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers

night and day. And she coming in that instant gave thanks likewise unto the Lord, and spake of him to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem."

Reared according to the Old Testament pattern, such persons easily glided into the New Testament life. In one sense, they are to be considered the Christians of that former dispensation. Abraham saw the day of Christ afar off, and was glad. Simeon and Anna saw that same day near at hand, and so were gladder still. Doubtless they had been for many years meek and exemplary servants of a Master unseen; in whom, though they saw him not, yet believing, they rejoiced with joy unspeakable and full of glory; receiving the end of their faith, even the salvation of their souls. They lived up to the light they possessed, strict in all the ceremonial observances of the law of Moses, yet not as a mere perfunctory or meritorious performance, but discerning spiritually in each enactment a true meaning which gave it its value, and receiving every particular in the ancient ritual as a type and shadow of the coming Messiah. There were not many of these people, but there were some.

Very beautiful seem such devout old men and women, like Simeon and Anna, around the person of that infant Saviour. They resemble loyal courtiers hailing the prince of their kingdom as he comes to his rightful throne. And very beautiful always seems the sight of an old believer, spiritually ranging himself, even in our time, on the side of Immanuel, son of Mary, son of David, son of God!

“The glory of young men is their strength: and the beauty of old men is the gray head. The hoary head is a crown of glory, if it be found in the way of righteousness.”

The chief element which characterized such faith as this was its expectancy. Those steady believers were looking forward. The constant hope in their hearts was that “the Lord’s Christ” would come. They were “waiting for the Consolation of Israel.” Think what profound significance there is in that name—the *Consolation!* Most strikingly does it follow the prophecy which bids the Messiah to be the *comfort* of God’s people. Harmoniously does it chime in with the present stay of the church, the *Comforter* which Jesus himself promised and afterwards sent. No one can fail to see how many and how signal are the advantages of such a state of expectancy.

Better for men to walk by faith than by sight! Indeed, how pitifully discouraging it would be to imagine we had exhausted the gospel feast with the first taste of the food! A fine outlook supplements and enhances a fine look; quickening a reverent curiosity, stimulating holy meditation, sharpening devotional appetite, causing the whole soul so to hunger and thirst after righteousness, as that the best gratification which can be offered to it is just the righteousness it craves. Our lives are moulded, our innermost experience fashioned, under the full pressure of things around us in daily association—this is not to be disputed. But, more than by anything else, the Christian’s future is fixed by the future which he

sees. Our highest and best hopes are on ahead. "What God has laid *out* for his children," says quaint Matthew Henry, "is much; but what he has laid *up* for them is more."

But now a question arises: What gave men such a solicitously alert seeking exactly at this time? The answer reveals one of the most interesting providences of God concerning the advent of Jesus. It seems to have been intended that before he should appear, he should have a fair right to receive the name applied to him—the Desire of all nations. So the desires of humankind were excited towards him in anticipation of his arrival. Certain prophecies, contained in the Old Testament scriptures perhaps started the rumor. At all events, the fact is perfectly clear that, during the period crossed by the early life of Simon son of Jonas, the world at large was with an anxious eagerness expecting Christ to come any moment.

We know this from the sketches of the biographer Suetonius, from the annals of the historian Tacitus, from the eclogue of the poet Virgil. And Josephus adds his testimony likewise. These men did not make the report, they simply witnessed the fact that there was such a report in wide and credited circulation. Across the entire continent—which was then the known world—there prevailed the intense conviction that ere long, just now, within a month or a year or a day, at any time, a mighty King was coming in Judæa who should set up and hold dominion over all the earth; that in him humanity should find its solace and its blessing; and the primal

forfeit of the divine favor and image should be requited and restored.

That was enough to make anybody look upward to whom in that general listlessness the power of thought remained. It is not now worth while to load these pages with quotations which are familiar from a thousand repetitions. The plain words of Suetonius will be sufficient here. He says: "There had been circulating throughout the East an ancient and constant opinion that a person or persons were destined to appear at this time in Judæa, who should conquer the world and set up a beneficent government over the whole of it." The illustration, which is also a proof, is found in that visit of the Wise Men from the far East, who came in search of the Saviour.

Why may we not suppose that Zebedee and Salome —of whom we hear such excellent things afterwards—as well as Jonas and Johanna (if that was his wife's name), of whom we are sorry to hear nothing, were among the waiting and watching believers of that day? Why not imagine these young men, John, James, Philip, Simon, and Andrew, were reared under just such tutelage of piety and prayer during all those years of their opening lives? The Jews have a form of oath, among the most binding they ever employ, "By my hopes of beholding the Consolation." Think of those good villagers again. How they would go forth, like Isaac at eventide, to meditate upon the peculiar care Jehovah had bestowed on their fathers and would continue to their children; how their hearts would swell among Jerusalem scenes,

as they visited them at the feasts, musing upon the former glory of the realm when the throne of David had been filled and the palace of Solomon had been tenanted by the Lord's own Anointed ; how eagerly they would anticipate the day when perhaps even their failing eyesight should rejoice in the restoration of everything they had been holding so honored and so dear !

People in our country often go further for Sabbath services than Bethsaida was from Nazareth. But Simon did not know what Mary pondered in her heart. He spent those twenty troubled years of his mature life without once seeing Jesus, though close beside him !

CHAPTER IX.

THE VOICE IN THE WILDERNESS.

“When the tale of bricks is doubled, then comes Moses:” this is an apothegm familiar among the Jews even to the present day, and rehearsed in their stories of the past. But Moses came twice; and, the first time, he was abruptly rejected. The “Prophet like unto Moses,” promised and at last announced to our sin-enslaved race as the Redeemer, was introduced by a forerunner, who was not accepted any more than his Master. John the Baptist was ultimately beheaded for his reward of fidelity; and the Lord Jesus was crucified.

Thus it comes about that Christ’s sad history strikes back on John’s, and gives it an unexpected interpretation. Very true have proved those words of Heinrich Heine: “Wheresoever a great soul in this world has uttered its thoughts, there always has been Golgotha.”

Affairs had now reached the last crisis. Pontius Pilate was misgoverning Judæa, filling history with extortions and infamies of crime. A new Herod, worthy of the name, was shaming the people with villanous lusts and defections in faith, his desperate morals fitly keeping pace with his downward career of apostasy. At Rome, Tiberius was living that

life which Suetonius was to record in volumes so prurient and polluted that modern readers have to fill out the expurgated pages of filthy sentences with asterisks and blanks.

Suddenly was heard a voice in the wilderness. There was singular pathos in it, as there is in all human tones that have power. But it had, besides that, a sort of vibrating ring in it which intimated a challenge. Experts say that idiots, even in the midst of a gibbering frolic, will pause abruptly to listen to the sound of a musical instrument; perhaps some vague recollection of primal harmonies in a healthy nature before it was shattered may be awakened by the stir near by; the soul seems seeking to render answer, but only succeeds in giving wistful attention. That was not a loud voice in those days down by the Dead Sea, but all Judæa heard it; and up the Jordan it rushed with more than the usual celerity; it certainly in due time reached the villagers in the land of Genesaret, for some of them journeyed at once toward it—notably, Simon, son of Jonas, and John and James and Andrew, who were destined to figure in the train of Jesus Christ.

The great wicked world of that time checked its ribaldry for some solemn moments to hear what such a preacher had to say. What he did say was surely worth the hearing: "Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." That call aroused consciences which indulged no false alarms. Men began to go down to the Jordan River from all directions in vast crowds, on a mission of inquiry which they called

curious, but which was really anxious. They found an individual of singular appearance and habit. He wore a camlet tunic, a loose garment of coarse sack-cloth, bound close to his person with a thong of untanned hide. His skin was bronzed with seasons of exposure in the strange defiles near what is now called Mar-Saba, the lower Kidron Valley between Bethlehem and the emaciated hills by the Dead Sea. His uncut hair hung down wildly over his shoulders, for it was vowed for him that no razor should come upon his head as a Nazarite; this had been covenanted even from his earliest infancy. Stories were told about his living altogether upon locusts dipped in salt water and dried so that they looked somewhat like shrimps—just such poor food as the lowest people now eat in the same dreary district; these, it was said, John rendered palatable or endurable by wild honey which he might happen to find in the rocks.

Perhaps among the companies that visited this man in the desert, there were some few old neighbors who remembered those remarkable circumstances of Elisabeth's history thirty years before, up in the hill country near Hebron. It is likely they would recognize in this preacher the mysterious child who as he grew had "waxed strong in spirit," and had then disappeared into "the deserts," and possibly would exclaim, the moment they set eyes upon him, "Why, this is the son of Zacharias, whose birth was foretold by the angel Gabriel! He has doubtless been dwelling in these lonely solitudes ever since he was a lad; not a word has been heard of him for a generation!"

The success which this desert preacher secured was wonderful. The language intimates that the entire country was moved into excitement, and actually gathered into assemblages around him: "Then went out to him Jerusalem, and all Judæa, and all the region round about Jordan, and were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins."

We must recollect that this was the great Sabbatical year of the Jews; the people were less busy; the whole land was at rest; a religious atmosphere was breathing around them; and so the awakened multitudes swept forth from their homes on every hand. Bethabara—the little fording-place just north of Jericho—was thronged with eager listeners from all classes and social conditions. When we consider all the circumstances, it would seem as if this solemn man from the wilderness had drawn the whole country into his train. Our Saviour bore remarkable testimony to his powers. He pronounced him a "burning and shining light;" and once he left this stately verse, as a careful and exact register of the man and his office: "Verily, I say unto you, Among them that are born of woman, there has not risen a greater than John the Baptist: notwithstanding, he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he."

Thus he gave them to understand that John owed all his amazing strength with the multitude, not to any personal endowments of intellect, nor to any advantages of education, but to the supremacy of the heaven-sent truth he preached; at the best, he was a

sinner needing to be saved; his force came from grace, not from gifts.

At first the feeling must have been full of insatiate curiosity. Who was this strange being? Many went down to the Jordan, and came back repeating inquisitive surmises they had heard. Some said he was the real Messiah; others said he was Elijah; others still mysteriously whispered that a new prophet had been sent with a startling message from the long-closed sky. Meantime, John reiterated his precise errand, and coupled it with fresh warnings. His office was that of a simple forerunner; he was the voice crying in the wilderness—*vox et præterea nihil*—a voice and nothing more.

“ And as the people were in expectation, and all men mused in their hearts of John, whether he were the Christ or not, John answered, saying unto them all, I indeed baptize you with water; but one mightier than I cometh, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to unloose; he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire: whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and will gather the wheat into his garner; but the chaff he will burn with fire unquenchable.”

And now, if there had been such a thing as a spiritual barometer in the land of Israel, it would have awakened in the heart of a thoughtful man the liveliest alarm; for the sinking of the index at this period was unprecedented. There was coming a storm of convulsion, tempest, and fire; the sunshine was bright and pleasant around those old Pharisees,

but the thunder was muttering ominously down by the Jordan. One morning, while the Baptist was at his ordinary work, administering that rite by which his converts entered into the promise of a new life, some of the chief people of the aristocratic sects presented themselves. It is evident, from John's manner as well as from his language, that he was astonished beyond measure at their visit. His abrupt challenge must have given them a singular surprise; for when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, he said unto them, "O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?"

It is easy to conjecture now that sharp conversation passed on between them. Here was a man, trained to solitudes where for a score of intelligent years he had had his own way with words, with no fear of contradiction before his eyes, no special tremor in the presence of supercilious hypocrites, of whom he had not asked odds. He demanded what they were there for. And they probably answered, "We have come to repent; we are here to be baptized for the remission of our sins; we are ready for a becoming confession."

"Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance," replied this stern servant of God, perfectly well aware of the insincerity of those with whom he was summoned to deal, knowing they desired no more than to patronize him.

Then it seems as if they, being angrily excited at his classing them with such poor peasants as were

following him at the time, must have said something about their belonging to a race of sanctified people, dating far back to the Father of the Faithful himself. For suddenly, pointing to the bleak rocks lying close by, with one of his quick gestures of inexpressible contempt, John exclaimed—"And think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father; for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham."

The result could have been anticipated; these self-satisfied formalists went their way with consciences sorer perhaps, but with wills in no measure subdued; they came to be endorsed by John, not to be lectured by him. Humbler people plainly got on far better.

"And all the people that heard him, and the publicans, justified God, being baptized with the baptism of John. But the Pharisees and lawyers rejected the counsel of God against themselves, being not baptized of him."

Then came the roar of the storm, and the rocking of spiritual earthquake. The nation was moved; the foundations were shaken. Faction contended with faction; and this haggard man with the bold words answered with denunciations. He who could call Pharisees *vipers* called an adulterous king by the name he deserved. But multitudes of common people heard him gladly. All those sighing, waiting believers listened and turned away from their sins. The villages sent forth crowds from all the districts. And among them we find Simon son of Jonas, and Andrew, James, and John, from Galilee.

And now let us seriously pause for a thoughtful moment, just to let our imagination catch a single picture on the page of eternal history. Two lives have started out—one from Nazareth, one from Bethsaida; these two are to meet at the side of John the Baptist, and are never to be separated again; Simon will soon reach a companionship with Jesus which will give him a cross and a crown!

But first there must be a discipleship of the law coming solemnly in order before the discipleship of the gospel. Nowhere can we find any record of the meeting at the Jordan. It is left to an easy conjecture that Simon was baptized, but it is not stated. We catch our earliest sight of this fisherman there in the crowd. It is fair to ask, What went he forth to see? A reed shaken with the wind? Ah, but this preacher was no reed! All sinew and soul, his figure rose among the sedges beside the river exceedingly substantial and real. But what did he go forth to see? A man clothed in soft raiment? Anybody could have told him that they who wear soft clothing are in kings' houses. But what went Simon out for to see? A prophet? Yea, and more than a prophet, the Forerunner of Christ.

Think of a man like Simon coming in contact with a man like John the Baptist! For once this son of Jonas met a King of men!

‘John, than which man a sadder or a greater
 Not till this day has been of woman born:
 John, like some iron peak, by the Creator
 Fired with the red glow of the rushing morn.

This, when the sun shall rise and overcome it,
Stands in his shining desolate and bare;
Yet not the less the inexorable summit
Flamed him his signal to the happier air."

Here was the turning point of that fisherman's life. For an agonized and convulsed day or week or month—no one knows how the time was lengthened—he saw himself a poor, foolish, wicked sinner. Most likely he had supposed up to this time that he was alive; for years he had worn his strips of Scripture around his forehead, and done his small rounds of service. Like Paul, he was alive once because he was without the law; now he had met this searching man among the bushes by the Jordan; and John was the personification of Law. So when the commandment came, sin revived, and Simon died.

That is to say, the disclosure of what the divine law really meant condemned him. It laid hold of the heart; and this man suddenly discovered that his heart had never been in the shallow ceremonials of the Pharisees; nor had he received God's pardon.

Night after night, perhaps, when John had finished baptizing, and the restless throngs had gone away, and the stillness had settled over the plain, and only the river was moving on, swiftly as life was moving on, and only the stars were serene overhead, deep darkness in its awful suggestion was his companion, and heavy pain was his experience. For John had said one thing full of force and terror to a rustic man, whose imagination was picturesque like his: "And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees;

every tree therefore which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down and cast into the fire."

What did that mean? That God's mercy was waiting for sinful men to mend their ways, and was willing to give them a chance just a little longer. As a husbandman would drop his axe beside a tree-trunk, from whose branches came no fruit, deciding not to cut down the useless thing, but to grant a warning for a single season more, and leave his axe lying at the root for a sign—just so God was now signaling his patience with the nation and the race.

These Bethsaida men had been reared to what hitherto appeared valuable routines and ceremonies of duty. Simon saw now how ineffably mean these punctilios were. His eyes were opened. If the law of Moses had been enough once, it could never be enough hereafter. For the great Light was in the world, and John was here bearing witness of it. So new responsibilities had been thrown upon a soul according to the knowledge it had received. In the overwhelming earnestness of the forerunner Simon perceived his own cause of alarm. He could nevermore be what had satisfied him before.

"And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent; because he hath appointed a day in the which he will judge the world in righteousness, by that man whom he hath ordained."

Oh, these days by the Jordan! They seemed like a section of the Day of Judgment coming before its

time! Yet, in his very hopelessness, this fisherman would find his hope. For John told him again and again of the One who should increase in *his* decrease soon.

And John the Baptist was a reality. This poor world of ours has been so often trifled with that it has learned to be satisfied thoroughly only with what is honest and true. There could be then no possibility of mistaking this man, nor Simon either; they were genuine. It is exhilarating to picture such men together for once.

Virgil tells us that when Æneas descended into Hades to visit his father, he came to Charon's ferry across the infernal river. As he stepped into the light boat, accustomed to carry only ghosts, so heavy a weight of a living man made the craft tremble and creak through all the length of its sewed seams.

We can presume that the hollow forms of social life in those wretched days were writhed and strained, if not shattered, by an uncompromising reality of manhood like that of John the Baptist at the Jordan. He was a man among the shadows of men. He had an actual "idea." He shook off the shams of religion, and told men a great deal more about religion itself than they ever knew before.

This being with the uncouth hair, and the scant garment, and the bronzed face, and the piercing eye, disdained all the adventitious shows of authority and drove his arguments straight toward the consciences of men. He put himself within reach of living people. Only he shred away the veils, and

tinsels, and mockeries of an outward show; he tore up traditions and mere commandments of men.

“And the people asked him, saying, What shall we do then? He answereth and saith unto them, He that hath two coats, let him impart to him that hath none; and he that hath meat, let him do likewise. Then came also publicans to be baptized, and said unto him, Master, what shall we do? And he said unto them, Exact no more than that which is appointed you. And the soldiers likewise demanded of him, saying, And what shall we do? And he said unto them, Do violence to no man, neither accuse any falsely; and be content with your wages.”

And this, *this*, in the midst of a community which was wont to peril the vast interests of the eternal future upon the length of a piece of parchment on the forehead, or the weight of a tithe!

Into the leadership of such a man as John would the loyalty of such a man as Simon instantly surrender itself. The son of Jonas had met his master. And that master's Master stood just beyond. And we need not be surprised to learn that, when we next look upon this Galilean fisherman, we shall see him in the full light of Immanuel the Son of God. And there will his life be ranged for all time to come, till Simon becomes Peter, and Peter is glorified.

CHAPTER X.

THE FINDING OF SIMON.

Artists, the world over, have furnished us with a great many representations, in marble and upon canvas, of the finding of Moses. Why does not some one produce this much more picturesque and pathetic scene of the New Testament, the finding of Simon Peter? "One of the two which heard John speak, and followed him, was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. He first findeth his own brother Simon, and saith unto him, We have found the Messiah; which is, being interpreted, the Christ."

Some slight rehearsals of the history at this point will help us to understand the unceremonious appearance of these two fishermen in the story. It appears that our Lord one day, almost immediately after his baptism, was walking by the river Jordan, near which his cousin, John the Baptist, was still lingering in the company of some friends. This wonderful man had gathered around his person a band of close adherents. They followed him, and learned of him, and so are called his disciples. To them, John, lifting his lean finger, and gesturing with his keen eye, pointed out the figure of the Nazarene Prophet as he advanced, and exclaimed:

"Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world!"

Among the company at that moment were two

Galileans, whom we learn afterwards to have been Andrew, Jonas' son, and another John—the son of Zebedee—both from Bethsaida, neighbors and friends. These, apparently rendered curious by the words of the haggard Baptist, turned away from him at once and began to follow the retreating footsteps of Jesus along the bank. Thereupon, the Saviour, discovering they were quite intent on coming up with him, checked his pace, and courteously asked them what they desired of him.

“Master, where dwellest thou?” Thus they answered his inquiry by putting another.

Jesus gave them an invitation in reply, intimating that, if they would come on with him, they might see for themselves.

It was then about four o'clock in the afternoon—the margin of our English Bible says—“About two hours before night.” It is not certainly recorded where the Son of Man was then laying his homeless head. Some think he was abiding in a hut of boughs, some small “succoth” of oleander or willow cut from the near forests, and covered with a striped blanket of camel's hair. Others conjecture he chose the ordinary tent of coarse canvas—such as the pilgrims in those times used, when they came up to the annual festivities at Jerusalem, and encamped upon the slopes of the Mount of Olives—such as in all likelihood many of the Baptist's desert listeners employed for their shelter in the chilly nights beside the river. Still, it seems better to think of our Lord as having quarters in a dwelling of some relative or friend in

the neighborhood, by whose hospitality he was for the time being made welcome.

At any rate, wherever his abode was, the men followed him to the door. They probably looked upon Jesus as one of the traveling Rabbins, and in his answer to their question our Lord made use of the formula these religious teachers frequently employed when the systems they promulgated fell into discussion:

“Seeing is believing; come and see!”

Pascal has been quoted as saying very suggestively that human things must be known to be loved, but divine things must be loved first before they can be known. “Come and see,” exclaims David. “Come and see,” pleads Philip with Nathanael. “Come and see,” cries the Samaritan woman to her neighbors. “Come and see,” Jesus says here likewise. It is the invitation for all time. Christianity wants nothing of all its opposers along the ages of history but just a fair look at it out of eyes willing to see.

No record now remains of this interview of those two men, as they entered and conversed with Jesus. Only the imagination knows its significance. What an evening of disclosure it must have been to them! What a revolution in their ways of thinking! What a crisis to their lives! What a turn to all their prospects in future!

They may have staid till late that night; some imagine they talked all the night. At this impressive moment, when they went in to have a conference with Jesus about what John said, begins their long history which finally nailed Andrew on his singular gibbet of

crucifixion, and sent John, the son of Zebedee, an aged and lonely exile, into Patmos for the visions of the Apocalypse.

We could have pardoned Andrew and John if they had forgotten everything beside, and just remained at the Master's feet in a companionship so extraordinary and a communion so dear as that visit in the night afforded. But Andrew seems to have already caught the spirit of the exhortation, which his comrade John was inspired long years afterwards to press: "Let him that heareth say, Come." Up, therefore, at the early morning call of the Holy Spirit, he instantly hurried out for a new convert; and the story goes on to relate, "He first findeth his own brother Simon."

Here, then, is brought out the interesting fact that Andrew became the human instrument in the conversion of the great Apostle of the Circumcision. The sovereignty of God might easily have ordered this otherwise, and dealt with Peter as it did with Paul in his arrest. No intervention whatsoever was disclosed in the awful moment when Saul of Tarsus was stricken down on the road to Damascus. The voice he heard was that of Jesus in person. Here, however, we find the introduction of fraternal help. Andrew brought to the Saviour this brother of his with quickness and persistency.

Richard Baxter's somewhat enthusiastic biographer, when contrasting him with Orton, remarks, "The one would have set the entire world on fire while the other was lighting a match!" It is true there are torpid temperaments among Christian workers, whom

it seems actually impossible to start into energy and life. But this act of Andrew, and the subsequent record of Simon Peter himself, would produce a somewhat strong impression that Jonas' family, as a whole, kept fully up to the line of legitimate zeal.

Let us hope that John likewise—the other one from the Baptist's disciples who had shared the choice instructions of that interview in the night with Jesus—was as expeditious in seeking a convert, possibly his own brother James, as was Andrew in seeking Simon, and that those sons of Zebedee became one in heart and one in grateful remembrance of each other, like the sons of Jonas.

Indeed, some peculiarities in the phrasology here employed, coupled with the fact that John alone, of all the Evangelists, has recorded the incident of Peter's first becoming acquainted with Jesus at Bethabara, would lead us to believe that he felt himself entitled to claim some share in the invitation that brought it about. For when this verse says Andrew "first findeth his own brother," it does not assert that the first act he did was this, but that he was the first one who did this. Just as if these two firm and old friends from Galilee had been speaking together in the gray light of that wonderful morning, and had remarked to each other: "Now this is the thing which Simon, above all others, ought to know at once; let us look him up as soon as possible."

And then, in separating for the search, Andrew had caught an earlier glimpse of him than John; but John, though disappointed in the fact, appears to

have felt he might rejoice in the memory. We know he wrote that gospel which bears his name, in the very latest years of his apostolic life, when he was an aged exile in the East, away from his home upon an island around which melancholy waves of the sea kept moaning. Yet even in those few choice particulars of history he saw fit to include, he took pains to rehearse this, as if he felt a sort of fond and loving pride in the fame of his Bethsaida townsmen. No one can possibly pass by the spring of exhilaration, the liveliness of the language, here in the inspired narrative. Each paragraph is exceedingly brief, but the spirit of it is unmistakably brisk and elate—as if this aged Evangelist, last of the apostolic band, had in the years of his lonely waiting learned to rejoice with a tender reminiscence, since all of those old comrades were vanished now, that the little village where he was born had furnished five out of the twelve whom Jesus chose for his disciples; that these without exception had written the record of an honorable career; and that he himself might now, perhaps, just be permitted to mention he had been concerned in bringing Simon—the recognized chief of them all—to his first meeting with Christ.

All this seems perfectly natural; they may both have started on the same errand, only Andrew found the man first. But John certainly felt he, too, was to be congratulated upon the result. And it will do no harm if we think that just here was where the beloved disciple earliest learned the force of the commandment which, as he afterwards wrote in one of his

epistles, he had from the highest authority, "That he who loveth God love his brother also."

This part of the gospel history shows us how essentially the spirit of our religion is a missionary spirit. It rejects all monopolies of grace. John's story here has, most aptly, been called "the chapter of the Eureka's." It is fairly crowded with "findings" and "finds." We are not surprised that such phraseology continually recurs. For every one who is ready to shout, "We have found," now, as then, goes instantly on an errand of finding. Andrew finds Simon, and then tells him simply what he has found. Jesus finds Philip, and Philip in turn finds Nathanael, and says the Messiah is found. Thus these happy voices of relief fly from one to another; and thus they fly now all around the living world.

We are not informed where Simon abode when Andrew looked him up. It is of no importance to know more than that he was within a fraternal reach of influence and within a possible reach of Christ. Andrew knew instinctively that his brother would be welcome the moment Jesus set eyes upon him. Indeed, it may be assumed always by Christian workers that the good Lord in converting them gave pledges of grace to every soul they might bring to him. And hence the rule of all successful evangelization of the world is discovered in just this principle: let every believer go instantly to work, and let each begin upon the soul which stands next to him.

We must remember that Simon had gone a good way on towards Jesus when he had been going on so

far towards John. That human soul is very near to Christ's gospel who is agitated under the denunciations of the Forerunner's law. Moreover, Andrew opened an unusually wide store of exciting information, when he made his brother see that this new preacher was in all serious likelihood the actual Messiah of Israel. Meaning of untold and indescribable importance was condensed into the explosive language he used in order to arouse Simon's curiosity, "We have found the Christ."

He suddenly invoked the entire power of the ancient record. The passionate longing of many a generation was concentrated into one utterance. During forty centuries, never had any devout Hebrew mother fastened her first eager look upon her new-born infant without solemnly wondering whether it might not be her child which should be the "Seed of the woman" that should according to the promise made in Paradise "bruise the serpent's head."

The visions of the prophets, the inspired symbols of the ceremonial law, the fervid predictions of the singing psalmists, all pointed towards one luminous Star which was hanging out in the future over where Immanuel should be born. We can well imagine how Andrew's eye would flash, how his cheek would glow, with the intensity of his excited enthusiasm, as he rapidly rehearsed these now familiar words in the ear of the listening Simon. That mysterious night with Jesus had wrought in his own mind the absolute fullness of a profound conviction—just that which always inspires the sentences of human speech with indispu-

table force. Never fell a more weighty announcement upon mortal ear than that which he now spoke in the hearing of his brother. It was the world's glad "Eureka" after its four thousand years of puzzle over its worst problems.

Hence this little formula of great meaning served the strict purpose of a primitive creed to those new disciples of Jesus. It was the confession of Andrew's faith when he repeated it to Simon, and Philip took it up easily when he made announcement to Nathanael: "We have found him, of whom Moses in the law and the prophets did write—Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph!"

Just now our story leads us forward a step. Andrew's duty was not yet done. In every true conversion much more is demanded than a bare intellectual acceptance of the articles of a creed:

"Cold belief is not conviction; rules are impotent to move;
Let me see the Saviour's beauty, let me learn his depths of love;
Let the light illumine my darkness which around the apostle shone;
Let me gaze upon thy glory—change to flesh this heart of stone."

The sovereign act, by which a human being receives a divine being as an indweller, so that as a fact the Holy Spirit becomes permanently resident in his soul, is in all cases alike an inscrutable mystery. But there are spiritual processes leading up to it and increments of increase on beyond it. Hence we must always recognize what are denominated the means of grace.

We have already noted with sincere admiration the means employed by Andrew in leading his

brother to Jesus. Their wise simplicity affords an ample explanation of their wonderful success.

There were only two of them : first, he taught him ; then, he brought him. He plied instruction, then he used persuasion.

We should have been surprised had this been otherwise ; for a man like Simon does not yield his heart to the gospel easily. If this man in particular had surrendered his life without a conflict, certainly it would have been the only instance we should ever have known of his surrendering anything without a good deal beforehand to be said. Peter was obstinate and opinionated in the presence of his equals ; he was complaisant and civil only in the presence of those above him or below him. Jesus often could check him, and the maid-servant could provoke him ; and in the early years of his discipleship he bent with about the same obsequiousness to the rebuke of the one and the taunt of the other. But from those associates who were his natural comrades, Peter would not willingly receive advice ; he reckoned himself among the leaders, not the led.

Hence we are inclined to lay some stress upon this word in the Scripture story, when we are told that Andrew "brought" him to the Saviour, as if it really might imply a measure of strenuous exertion, or force of argument, or pressure of fraternal affection. We do seriously believe that he accompanied the presentation of an intellectual disclosure of truth with the energy of affectionate entreaty and the solicitude of a strong desire.

Of course, we understand that the Spirit of divine grace was present and efficient in the whole transaction. God himself, the Holy Ghost, in person sent Andrew back in search of his brother, making him the earliest apostle among the disciples. He must have so aided him in the presentation of doctrine and the marshaling of motives in accepting it, while he talked with him, as that this Simon, slow and stubborn to follow others at any time, should now be willing to go where this new preacher was waiting to receive him.

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CHAPTER XI.

SIMON BECOMES PETER.

The first human being that ever had need of a Saviour was a man called Adam; and that name means—a *man*. The first human being that ever found a Saviour was a man called Andrew, and that name also means—a *man*. Humanity cries out unto God, and to humanity God answers. But the first man went on distributing his calamity of sin, while the second man started to tell of salvation.

We have already seen how Andrew made his mark—a single and noteworthy mark—when he was honorably entrusted with the task of leading Simon Peter out into the new life. He became conspicuous as an instrument in entering this apostle on a public career.

The picture suggested in the New Testament narrative grows from this moment very interesting and graphic. Together these two Bethsaida brothers advanced most unconsciously in their spiritual history, as they went forward on their way towards that modest abode—one could wish we knew just where it was—which Andrew and John had left early that morning. Assured of an immediate admission by the grace displayed before, they entered the presence of the Lord. Simon at last stands face to face with Jesus.

It is always a most impressive moment, that in which two historic persons meet for the first time. This earliest glimpse of the Nazarene Rabbi fixed all that fisherman's future. What must Simon have

thought of him! How memorable such an interview! Yet no record has been made of it beyond these few sentences now under our study. "When Jesus beheld him, he said, Thou art Simon, the son of Jona; thou shalt be called Cephas, which is, by interpretation, a stone." Still, we cannot doubt that Simon's reflections took the shape of that startling suggestion offered by Andrew which had brought him to the spot. Here at the last—through all the windings of intricate and mighty history—it was permitted to his own eyes to see the Desire of all nations, the Shiloh of Israel! Here he was now standing before the Rod out of the stem of Jesse, which was the promised Plant of renown, the Wonderful, the Counselor! A mortal might look upon Immanuel, son of David, son of God! The old painters have had a tradition among them—nobody is certain where they got it, nor whether it can possibly be authentic—which has always outlined their conceptions of the personal appearance of Simon Peter. His frame was strong and burly, grown sinewy from the exposure of his life and calling. Dark and piercing, his quick eye looked out wistfully from under a heavy bluff of forehead. His hair was short, crisp, and curly, black at first, now just sprinkling with gray. He was then, as nearly as we can conjecture, about forty years old; in the very prime of life, somewhat uncouth in manners, rough in mien, but a grand, forceful, noble-hearted, impulsive toiler from the Sea of Galilee. How little he had to commend him to Christ! No station, no education, no patronage, no wealth, no human promise whatsoever.

And yet what heartiness there was in the welcome he instantly received!

Our Lord followed the Old Testament precedent. As Abram was re-named Abraham, and as Jacob was re-named Israel, so now Simon was re-named Cephas, or Peter. And the question arises, What did that mean?

Among the Hebrews, even from the earliest ages, names were always chosen for the sake of a significance they bore. Sometimes they described the character or demeanor of the child, possibly even the personal appearance or graces. More frequently they acted as memorials of an incident in family history. Names were all designed to express an idea. Hopes and reminiscences, wishes and intentions and plans for the future, were embodied in them. To alter an adult's name, therefore, was equivalent to the assertion of a modification of the individual, to a changing in some way of the purpose or direction of his entire life. It became a memorial of that change.

That Simon Peter interposed no objection at this point is an evidence of his immediate subjection to Christ. There must have been something unusual in our Lord's manner. "Jesus beheld him." The word here rendered *beheld* is singularly specific. It means a great deal more than merely that he fixed his eye steadily and intently upon his visitor, as if he would read his soul through and through. No doubt Jesus met a look in return from Simon full of honest reverence and surrender, a resolute and unutterably earnest devotion of self thereafter and forever to his

service. At such a moment it is likely that Simon accepted in his own behalf the name for Jesus which Andrew and John had already applied to him—"Master," that name grown so welcome to every Christian ear in the ages since, that name commended even by Jesus who received it: "Ye call me Master and Lord; and ye say well; for so I am." Most joyfully sings old George Herbert as he reads the meaning of the word:

"How sweetly doth 'My Master' sound! My Master!
As ambergris leaves a rich scent
Unto the taster,
So do these words a sweet content,
An oriental fragrancy—'My Master!'"

The first words of our Lord to Simon must have astonished an imperious mind like his; for here was one who assumed the unquestionable right to change the name he had always been called by: "Thou shalt be called Cephas, which is, by interpretation, a stone."

With perhaps a kind of play upon his father's name, also, the word Jona meaning a *Dove*, Jesus in effect says to this fisherman,

"Out of weakness, I make thee strong; Son of a Dove, hereafter become a Rock!"

One of the German commentators gives us what he considers a paraphrase of the Saviour's language thus: "Thou art Simon, the son of the shy Dove of the Rock; henceforth thou shalt be called the protecting Rock of the Dove!"

It is not unlikely that there passed much more conversation between Peter and Jesus, and it may have been late when they parted. If any one should ask at this juncture, When did Simon become experimentally a Christian? we think it would be safe to say that the real turning-point of his life was reached at that particular moment when his look met the look of Jesus. For this glance of divine mastership was not only one of those mental miracles by which our Lord immediately discovered character, but also one of those spiritual miracles by which he changed it. We cannot help recalling, out of our familiarity with the subsequent record of this disciple's history, that it was just another "look" from the same wonderful eyes which sent him forth from the scene of the denial a penitent, an humbled and an altered man.

Simon's instantaneous acceptance of Jesus as the Messiah of his nation, and the Saviour of his soul, was perfectly characteristic. In that supreme surrender of his whole being, most likely, his heart was changed by the Spirit of God, and the new purpose of life began to rule his career. For, as has been intimated, this is the universal significance of all these stories of changing the names of people in the Scriptures. As soon as Simon was called Peter, he "put off the old man with his deeds, and put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him." Thenceforward he was "a new creature."

Thus much in general terms as to the bestowment of a new personal name upon this disciple. It may

be worth while to dwell for a few moments of study upon the form of the name itself. The ordinary reader of our English Scriptures may be confused to find that here our Lord does not call his follower Peter after all, but "Cephas." And further: this last seems to be the appellation which the apostle Paul also almost invariably prefers in speaking of his associate. He uses Peter in only one instance—when writing to the Galatians; and scholars tell us that the oldest manuscripts insert Cephas even there as the correct reading. It is important to recollect that Cephas is the same as Peter; that is, Cephas in the Aramaic language—the old language of Palestine—means *Rock*, just as Peter does in the Greek. Many expositors assert that in ordinary conversation Jesus most likely used the Greek tongue, while on special and solemn occasions he employed terms from the vernacular *patois* of the regions where his early life had been spent.

We must not leave out of consideration the wise conjecture that this play upon words in the bestowment of a name is logically to be put alongside of that other familiar instance of the same import, rendered forever historic in the Protestant conflict with arrogance in the Church of Rome. It is discreet to say that such an appellation was designed to be a prophecy of the future work and position of Simon Peter, as the apostle, above all others, whom our Lord chose to lay the organic foundations of the New Testament church. For this Peter did, among the Jews on the Day of Pentecost, and in due

time among the Gentiles likewise by the conversion of Cornelius and of those baptized at Cæsarea.

This is not the time and place for any exhaustive discussion of such a matter. We need only say now, it cannot be that Christ intended to bestow upon this disciple at this early moment either a supremacy over all the rest in point of authority, or a universal sovereignty in the visible church of the future. The pretensions which have been founded upon the use of this name would be ridiculous, if they had not been accepted by the easy world in its darkest ages, so far as latterly to become gigantic.

One of the earliest questions which the cardinals put, when each new pope is elected in the Roman hierarchy, is this: "What is the name by which thou wilt be pleased to be called?" Thus is preserved what some one has designated as a "fond imitation" in the installation of each successor of Peter in the apostolic chair.

But even this is a late invention, and is said to have had a somewhat comical origin. For it dates back no further than the papal election of the year 844. Then it is recorded that one who assumed the office of pope had two misfortunes at once to deal with in his name. It was Peter di Bocca-Porco—which, being interpreted, means Peter of the Swine's Mouth. This man said he deemed it an irreverence to be called Peter, for no person could be admitted worthy to bear the august appellation which that apostle had primarily received from the Lord. And he probably had a clearer reason for not desiring to

be addressed as "His Holiness of the Swine's Mouth." Hence they crowned him as Sergius II. Since that time, all those who have been elected to the papal monarchy have in turn changed their old names for a new; but it has never been stated in history that any one of them has chosen to be called Peter.

Let us come back once more to the picture before us here now in the sacred story. Let us take a fresh look at this man, Jonas' son, as his brother Andrew leads him in, and leaves him standing in the presence of Jesus. Why call so inconsistent and fitful a man a *Rock* at all? Did our Lord appreciate what he was?

Leave out of notice all the worldly surroundings of this singular fisherman. There remains enough to excite our wonder in the single fact that Jesus did foreknow his entire biography, as a student of the New Testament would rehearse it now. When he said to him, "Thou art Simon the son of Jona," it was as if he had suddenly announced, "I know you, and understand all about you."

If any one is unwilling to consider it a proof of divine omniscience that Christ appeared acquainted with Simon from the opening of the interview, and that he recognized him the moment he was led in; if any one feels ready to assert, when he hears Jesus call the man by his own name as he did, that Andrew quite possibly had told it to him on the occasion of the night-visit beforehand; then—this instance being rejected—there still will remain the unexplained and unquestionable story of Nathanael, equally clear and equally marvelous. That "Israelite without

guile " was so astonished, when Jesus addressed him, that he asked, " Whence knowest thou me ? " Our Lord told him in reply that even before Philip had looked him up, he had seen him under the fig-tree.

It is a mere impertinence to call such recognitions " an innocent artifice," and compare Jesus in them to Joan of Arc, as one who was in the habit of averring that he knew something which intimately concerned him whom he wished to win, or who would seem to recall some circumstance dear to his heart in order to gain an influence. It is inconsistent with the genial frankness which Jesus displayed in all his friendships to imagine that he busied himself privately in picking up such little pieces of information concerning strangers, in order that on becoming acquainted he might arouse attention by springing upon them flattering surprises. Rather would we believe that our Lord divinely knew, measured, and registered every man he met. This was the way in which the disciples themselves understood it ; for John tells us explicitly that " Jesus knew all men, and needed not that any should testify of man : for he knew what was in man." He thoroughly comprehended what he was doing, when he welcomed such a person as Simon, abruptly made free to change his name on the spot, and even gave hint of his office.

With this man's after history before us, how astonishing all this seems ! He has nothing that we know of to fit him for the gospel ministry, but a conjectural knowledge of the Scriptures gained in his early life.

He appears unsophisticated and original enough

for our study as a new specimen of human nature. Coarse and opinionated; perhaps unusually skilful in the billingsgate of that upper country; boisterous and loud in the fish markets of Capernaum; there is reason to believe he used even to swear when at home, so easily did he subsequently lapse into the habit.

It may have been that our Lord searched through the mere surface-weakness of this as yet untrained and undisciplined temper of a genuine man, and discovered the real firmness of his character, the fearlessness and stability which under grace it might, and one day would, attain, the resolution and solidity it would settle into, the inflexibility of unalterable purpose it would at last exhibit. Simon was not going to deserve this new name for many sad months to come. But in the end the world would see that he was a Rock, which would be immovable when it should rest on the Rock of Ages.

CHAPTER XII.

THE SCHOOL OF GRACE.

Of two brothers—the first mentioned in the Old Testament—one murdered the other. Of two brothers—the first mentioned in the New Testament—the one brought the other to Jesus. It is an easy question to answer, which of these was worthiest of the name of his “brother’s keeper” in the annals of the race.

Since that memorable morning, when Simon Peter earliest came under our notice as a Christian man, and stood in the presence of Jesus, shining with the light of the new life on his forehead, many stirring events have passed into history. Jesus has been up to Cana and wrought a notable miracle; he has visited Jerusalem, and at a public feast has driven the traders out of his Father’s house; he has announced the doctrine of regeneration to his interesting audience of one, in that midnight conversation with Nicodemus; he has sent the converted Samaritan woman back into her city, and she has gathered scores of disciples for the Messiah; he has healed a nobleman’s child at the point of death; he has made a successful demonstration at Nazareth; rejected there, he has established his residence at Capernaum; here we meet him again among the fishermen, where he is already preaching and laboring for the Kingdom.

“And Jesus walking by the sea of Galilee, saw two

brethren, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea; for they were fishers."

The point of time, at which these words enter the record, is to be dated somewhat over a year after the arrest and imprisonment of John the Baptist. It becomes an interesting question where the two brothers mentioned had been in the meantime, and how occupied.

For some weeks after our Lord's baptism, the narrative fails. Jesus appears to have retired into seclusion. These disciples, acquaintance with whom he first made in Judæa, returned before long to their home in Bethsaida where they had been living, and resumed their occupation. But never after this were they what in previous years they had been; for now they were the true children of God.

There is an ineffable mystery and grandeur in this new life which is by Christ. It lifts, it ennobles, it illuminates, an entire history and character. We see that young workingman Andrew suddenly made a preacher of the gospel. He had been the means of conversion to another soul than his own. What was Andrew only one short month before? And what was John? And what was Simon Peter?

Three fishers went out on a journey of curious seeking for a strange prophet, of whom they had heard great things even so far away as Capernaum. They left their nets drying on the beach at the haunts in Bethsaida, while they should go down to the Jordan. Nobody ever talked about these simple neighbors before. No gleam of promise rested over their

future. They had no cultivation of mind, no graces of manners. Yet note how changed in everything they had returned from that visit. What a world of difference it had made to them all that they went in company to Bethabara, where John the Baptist was preaching! How they would comfort each other now!

Bethsaida must have rung with the glad tidings when these familiar voices announced as they came back, that they had found and seen the great Messiah of their nation. But we cannot conceal our surmise that their testimony simply brought them into ridicule and contradiction all around the lake. And we presume that, as months glided along, it became a sore subject among the doubting townsmen, and these friends were drawn closer and closer to each other by an occasional slight of reproach. But how they would enjoy the sweet company of those who believed them! On all that sheet of water—in all those little villages by the beach—how many were the busy boats, thronged with toiling men! Yet in all Fishing-town only an unnoticed band of just three fishers represented the New Testament church; for only these were Christians by the acceptance of Christ.

It could be wished that we knew when Salome and Zebedee, Philip and James, gave their adherence to the same truth and entered the new life. It seems pleasant to think of those seven people at last having a sort of companionship in Christ there in Galilee.

Imagine the joyous communings of spirit they

would have with each other, when no one was by to disturb them with jibes of unbelief. Quiet, tender, long-remembered hours they would talk together out upon the beautiful waters on that inland sea. How glad Andrew was in Peter; how grateful Peter was to Andrew! We wonder at what date it was, when Andrew began to call his brother by the new name Jesus gave him, and whether he ever dared to do it in the unsympathetic presence of those Bethsaida neighbors.

Alone by themselves, that story, which was never to grow old, would be rehearsed whenever they met. It would be conversed about with partners and relatives who were willing to listen:—How they first saw John the Baptist, that haggard preacher who reminded everybody so much of Elijah, the moment men fixed their eyes on him—how sometimes they even surmised that he, this man in camel's hair raiment, might be himself the Messiah in disguise—how he compelled them seriously to see and sorrow over their sins; then led them openly to resolve they would henceforth try to lead a truer and a better life—and how on that wonderful morning Jesus came by, and John pointed him out; and then Andrew and Zebedee's John went over to find out about him, and Andrew came back afterwards for Simon. Oh, how providential it all appeared now, as they looked over it afresh, and at last understood its bearing on their history.

The highest work a man ever does in this world, is done when he goes himself first to Jesus, and then leads another man to him. The hopes are all bright

—the purposes and the plans—the themes of converse and the means of enjoyment—all are grand and lasting forever. No changeable affection was it after that which kept Andrew and Simon always together. We talk of trees planted, and institutions founded, and churches builded, and monuments erected: but better than all is a life redeemed and started into Christian work for the race of lost men, as Andrew started Simon's.

Still, this is not all. These fishermen appear also to have been kept in some sort of communication with Jesus in person. It is recorded that a few of the disciples were with him when he performed that first miracle at Cana of Galilee. Nazareth, his early home, was not far away from Bethsaida. Before he came into Capernaum to live, they may easily have journeyed to meet him, or he in turn come to them. And certainly, when he settled near the Sea of Tiberias, the whole company of them might frequently have been in his companionship in the market town where they sold their gains.

On the whole, it appears likely that Jesus passed this intervening period as many of the Jewish Rabbins did at that day. They were religious teachers at large, and were wont to collect classes of pupils, whom they orally instructed, and whom in their turn they sent forth to promulgate the doctrines they instilled. Their custom was to lecture, and then invite those who listened to ask questions. Thus always they piqued their curiosity, challenging their dialectic skill with puzzles and allegories—indeed,

the same general class of stories which, in our Lord's history, we are accustomed to call parables. They used to wander around from town to town; and their scholars would come to them, or go with them, sometimes sitting at their feet for a fresh lesson, sometimes expounding to little companies around themselves the lessons already learned. A custom similar to this prevailed through all the region. The likelihood is that our divine Lord quietly accepted the usages of his time, and that these friendly fishermen, during those eighteen or nineteen months, came continually into contact with him, and were carefully taught in the gospel from his own lips.

Hence we see it was no loss to Simon Peter or the rest that they had been allowed thus to live and learn for a season, before they were called forth into independently responsible work. They serve who wait. Nor was this unusual. All readers of Scripture history must have observed how often it was ordered that the chosen agents of divine plans who disclosed themselves eventually as men of mark should have a retired period of quiet meditation and study soon after the first designation of their lives to special service. Time lost in action was made up subsequently in force.

For some years following his official anointing David needed all the disciplines of strange outlaw life to fit him to be a king. Saul of Tarsus is believed to have delayed three entire seasons in Arabia, before he was publicly joined to the apostles. Moses, for a third of his whole history, dwelt in Midian, making

ready to be a fitting leader to bring up God's people out of Pharaoh's hand.

So here: Simon Peter seems to have been left for further instruction and thought, before he was summoned irrevocably from his ordinary calling and entrusted with the great charge of becoming a fisher of men. When the Lord was ready for him, he was more nearly ready for his office; and then the call was unhesitatingly made. Although it frightened him at first, we shall see that it found Simon far more trustworthy as well as more intelligently willing.

There can be no harm in pausing here long enough to say that a practical lesson of vast importance is given in this part of the sacred story. Simon Peter's docility at this crisis of his career is calculated to check and rebuke that impatient and restless disposition of modern young Christian workers who are in course of ordinary training for duty. One may be anxious to be out in the fame of public teaching now, when rather he ought to be patiently amassing experience and materials in his preparation; for no one is able to talk the celestial language well who has not first acquired the alphabet and mastered laboriously some of the inflections.

The thought will reach higher than this. A great man once averred that if there were given him but four years for work in the pulpit he would use three of them in just making ready to preach. One may fret to be out in the world before he is disciplined; but such men often fret more to be out of the field

afterwards. It is a very difficult thing to mention one preacher who has ever lamented he pursued the whole curriculum of study ; but we have all known a score who mourned that they ever so much as heard of the popular short-cuts to the pulpit through which they entered it.

Simon Peter was gradually becoming acquainted with his Master and Lord, during the progress of all those interesting interviews by the sea. He was opening his eyes to vast issues and learning more and more of the grandeur of this world's redemption to holiness and obedience. He was coupling the stern demands of the Baptist with the gracious reliefs of gospel mercy. He was beginning to behold the goodness and severity of God. And it would have altered the whole direction and tenor of his life if he had been abruptly advanced to that front place he was eventually to occupy.

But there is an end to everything, as there is a beginning. The time for the man's coming into public life was drawing nearer. When Jesus appeared on the beach, that November morning, it was no longer as a despised and unnoticed Nazarene. A great wave of popular favor was running in his behalf. The first year of our Lord's ministry in Galilee was an emphatic success. The whole population was stirred into excitement. The people thronged him in the synagogue and the street. At any moment he could find an audience, eager to hang upon his lips. The day was coming, and he knew it very well, in which this fickle Capernaum would turn

upon him wrathfully and spitefully. But just now he was at a height of gracious recognition, which rendered his civilities of extraordinary value. The transitions in his history were very like those in the natural features of country from the Jordan to the lake in Galilee. Those solemn solitudes around the Dead Sea might well suit the somber experiences of his temptation and the hard days of his rejection as a prophet. But now he has passed up into the sunshine of Gennesaret : and human beings, as well as beautiful landscapes, seem to extend to him a pleasant welcome. He is at last the Great Rabbi.

This is the exact moment he chooses to unite Simon Peter and the rest of the Bethsaida disciples close to him for all time. He suddenly presents himself, in the clear dawning of the day, as the fishermen are pulling in from their usual toil in the night.

Let imagination draw the picture which rises just here out of the scriptural recital. The autumn colors are at their highest splendor. The hills are almost alive with the weird phantasms of purple and violet, rose and gold, which are delicately chasing after each other along their surface of gray rock as the rising sun kindles it. The fresh breeze ripples the water everywhere, except within the shore-line, under the lee of eastern precipices, whose shadows seem to quiet it down. The walnut-trees look sober in the rich green of their foliage ; but the oleanders have flashed gloriously into flowers. Some tourists say that Gennesaret is a commonplace lake, and would be deplorably tame but for its touching associations.

Surely such persons have never seen it in the autumn.

Jesus has come down upon the shore, and is walking along silently, watching these Bethsaida brothers as they make what is, in all likelihood, a final and discouraged cast of their nets for the unlucky day. Perhaps his look is wistful and sympathetic when his eyes detect their want of success. But other plans are in his busily working mind. Of what was our Lord thinking? No one can venture to surmise. But there is no irreverence in our supposing the day of decision was now reached in which he was about deliberately to draw this Simon with the new name into his counsels of evangelization. Disciple he had already been made; apostle he was soon to become. One moment there was—and it may have been this one—in which Christ said to himself, as he afterwards said to Simon :

“Here, then, is the man upon whom I am going to lay the perilous and hard work of establishing my church on the earth.”

To some very good people such a choice appears most singular and astonishing ; for they will insist on thinking of Simon’s after-record of inconstancy and rashness. And it strikes prudent men as risky and indiscreet to peril so much on so little—to go to such a seashore to begin Christianity, and to start it with sailors.

We might settle, as well here as elsewhere, one great principle in God’s choice of men, as revealed to us in his word: the divine selection of agents has

always been based upon *availability*, and not upon goodness, upon efficiency rather than upon character.

If anybody chooses to go so far as to assert that Jesus, in accepting Simon Peter with so poor a prospect, intelligently made choice of a man fairly conspicuous for his defects, in order that all the glory of grand success in the future should necessarily be given to God where it belonged—it might not be easy to admit the statement with immediate acquiescence; but he would have the privilege of quoting most appositely for his purpose the familiar text:

“For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: but God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: that no flesh should glory in his presence. Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men.”

CHAPTER XIII.

OBEDIENCE AND SUCCESS.

“And it came to pass, that as the people pressed upon him to hear the word of God, he stood by the lake of Gennesaret, and saw two ships standing by the lake: but the fishermen were gone out of them, and were washing their nets. And he entered into one of the ships, which was Simon’s, and prayed him that he would thrust out a little from the land. And he sat down, and taught the people out of the ship.”

It seems that our Lord had been, as usual, preaching to the multitudes which thronged him wherever he went. These curious people pressed upon him so closely that he became inconvenienced with such a crowd. So he requested Simon, who was the occupant and owner of a fishing-boat, and who at this moment was drying his seines on the shore, as fast as he could rinse them off in the shallow water, to let him get in with him, and to push out a little from the beach, so that he could better his chance of speaking. Then he easily went on, and finished his discourse, sitting on the thwart.

But when, not unlikely, the disciple expected to take up his work again, Jesus surprised him with another, and this time a most singular, proposal. The instant he ceased preaching, he said:

“Launch out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught.”

It would appear that when our Lord made this pro-

posal to Simon, the other disciples came at once alongside close enough to overhear. They entered their own boat, and pulled nearer this one. We can seem to see the small company now as they gather around the vessel, and mark that unusual request. Any one can pick out Simon Peter earliest for a quick recognition, for we have already learned to know his figure. There is no doubt that he was tired; looked haggard and rough; was in his usual uncouth every-day costume.

But our Lord was in no wise ashamed of his companionship, even before all those supercilious Capernaum people; Jesus never did cherish any aristocratic "respect of persons." Every lawful vocation honored the man who filled it faithfully. And why not? He made no denial when they called him "the carpenter's son."

In the other boat were Simon's "partners." The work is so heavy sometimes in those prolific waters that the men, down to the present day, are accustomed to go out in pairs or parties, even in diminutive fleets together, sailing close enough for a call.

It comes to our notice here that all these men had been fishing the entire night upon the lake, and had had only "fisherman's luck." They were doubtless in some measure out of spirits. With the utmost alacrity had Simon welcomed the Master, while he made a pulpit of his vessel. And with delighted docility had he sat with oar in hand to steady it; for he loved to be an unhindered listener during all the fine discourse the Great Rabbi had delivered.

But this may have struck an outspoken man like him as proposing and expecting too much. When the sudden request came, that he should start forth for a new venture after fish, it must have excited him with an unmitigated surprise. Such a suggestion entered his own sphere of acquaintance with things; it touched on his judgment, it challenged the experience of many years, and offered room for the expression of an opinion. Indeed, the first steps of compliance involved a great deal of what must have seemed to Peter to be profitless labor. His nets were strung all along the beach; to gather them in now, wet and heavy, and go out for another haul, appeared simply preposterous. So he made his reply; and he introduced a quiet, but immediate, deprecation of the proposal into his acceptance of it. There can be no sort of doubt that this man carried the entire public sentiment of the Capernaum by-standers too, a large number of whom were still within hearing. Simon answered:

“Master, we have toiled all the night, and have taken nothing: nevertheless, at thy word I will let down the net.”

From this rejoinder, every one perceives that our Lord's suggestion appeared to Simon Peter partly professional, and partly unprofessional. And just so he constructs his inconsistent reply.

It was professional, in that it threw this man, an old hand at fishing, back on his peculiar trade. We feel instinctively, as we study the story, that this was exactly what Jesus intended. He wanted all those men

to register the force of the difficulties put in the path of their obedience. Hence it was perfectly legitimate for him to arrange their test in the sphere of life where it was a natural thing for them to think and say, if they wished to express an opinion, that they were better informed than he was.

But to be candid about it and do Simon Peter justice in full, this request was really couched in such language that obedience to it was most unprofessional. It invited him to act against all his commonplace experience. Christ did not seek his mere counsel concerning some experimental venture of his own; he seriously proposed that Simon should do what would, in his honest opinion, make an undoubted laughing-stock of himself before his caviling neighbors. What would "Peter's wife's mother" think of it, when she learned that he had gone back on the water for such an errand as that?

For there were three solid reasons against this procedure in the ordinary notions of the men. One was: it was past the time of day for fishing; nobody ever caught anything in the Sea of Galilee in the forenoon. Another was: Jesus had said he must push out into deep water, and that was positively no place for fishing; fishes seldom ran anywhere but in near the shores. And a third was: they themselves were all tired out with vain efforts already, worn quite too much to try needless hazards with washed nets. These experts intimated it was not a good day for fishing, anyway.

We may be certain that all Peter's partners sym-

pathized with him heartily, and most likely remarked to him something about such unprofitable risks under their breath. Fishermen are proverbially obstinate, inveterate in prejudices, set dreadfully in their ideas of knack in using tackle, and universally think they know more concerning fishing than anybody else in the world. Hence, with their ordinary philosophy of experience to back these disciples in a respectful refusal, it is very beautiful to observe how unhesitatingly they acquiesced. Simon (as was to be expected) makes a characteristic little apology just to soothe his professional pride; but throws the responsibility of probable failure on Jesus with uncomplaining respect, and then starts for the seines on the shore.

So we can picture all of them, the moment they step out upon the sands, a little away from constraint, letting out the pressure of their incredulous surprise as they strain to lift the damp nets, in pretty much the same line of speeches. There is this peculiarity in most oriental fishermen: they have a great habit of talking to themselves, rapidly and excitedly, when they are engaged in sinewy work. If they are doing nothing, they are indolent, and often sit silent and taciturn. But the instant one set of their muscles springs into exercise, it appears as if all the rest were loosened. One can hear more Arabic than he can remember in a life-time, in a single half-hour by the side of the Lake Gennesaret, when the men are vociferously about their business. And if those friends of Jesus, obedient and honest, did nevertheless give their feeling utterance under such

temptation, it would be nothing to lay up against them.

It would be characteristic for Simon Peter to dwell upon the difficulty which lay foremost in his mind; perhaps he would say:

“This going out again is perfectly useless: nobody can catch anything after daybreak: it is silly to fish in the broad sunshine: nevertheless, if the Master says so, I will let down the net!”

Then James, a sober and judicious man by reputation, would answer in his turn, throwing up his fingers to feel for the wind:

“A good long row without much promise: there will be no possible luck in deep water to-day: fish in this lake never run there: nevertheless, if the Master says so, I will let down the net!”

Even John, whom everybody knows was “the beloved disciple,” as Peter was the loving disciple, would have a word to add just then:

“Really there is less chance to-day than ever, for we look like a company thoroughly used up after such a night as last night: nevertheless, if the Master says so, I will let down the net!”

But while they talk, they work; and soon the tackle has been all hurried in; they pile up everything in one great huddle, shove the boats down endwise, spring aboard, and are off at the word.

Just here, before we forget it, we will fix our attention on a fine lesson for all Christians to learn: namely, that discouragements in duty never bring any release from the performance of it.

One may search all the inspired biographies in vain; he will nowhere find an instance of obedience under unpromising circumstances, more admirable and exemplary than this of Simon Peter. Experience in his case did not work hope; all the hope he felt made him ashamed. He had not one iota of confidence in this attempt he was making. Indeed, let us keep quite intelligent; Simon did not look upon himself as now going out a-fishing, but going out obeying.

To each of us often comes a like call to service of the same Master. And the question for every Christian, especially for every young Christian, to settle early, and once for all, is this: Am I going implicitly to obey my Lord? Do I pledge myself, no matter what stands in the way, to press on in the line of duty, and leave all doubt and hindrance to vanish, as it will, through the power I am promised by him who sends me? It is just such unwavering fidelity—just such invincible determination—just such illogical imprudence of daring faith—which, in all ages since Simon's day of obedience, has moved the world. We are never to choose our season, or select our ground; we are simply to listen and to obey.

We go on with the story. The men sailed in silence over the water, waiting for the gesture of Jesus to tell them where to stop. One can imagine that Simon Peter would look up now and then for an arrest, as they happened to be floating carelessly across what his knowledge of the lake told him were the best spots. But no signal dropped from the

Master's hand. And before long, even this leader must have discovered that Jesus had taken the whole matter into intelligent charge, and meant to cut off ordinary dependencies. The day grew hot, and the oars hung heavy; in one of the most unsuspected and unpromising places conceivable, the order suddenly came to their ears that they should let down their seines. "And when they had this done, they enclosed a great multitude of fishes: and their net brake."

That is, it was breaking—just beginning to break. The woven meshes were straining to the utmost. They dared not at once attempt to pull in the extraordinary haul. They did as fishers do in the same circumstances there now, in case they have to run another seine underneath that which seems giving way with the weight: "And they beckoned unto their partners, which were in the other ship, that they should come and help them. And they came, and filled both the ships, so that they began to sink."

Literally, they "nodded over" to them, out in the offing a short distance. Picture the overwhelming amazement of these fishermen, as they saw such a miraculous yield come forth from the sea! The vessels, dry and empty up to this supreme moment, now shook under the burden of their tremulous load. Not a mullet had been taken before; not even a poor bream had that day floundered over the thwarts. Now, all as in an instant, the waters around them seemed quivering and splashing with the unantici-

pated shoal; and in their boats the great heaps of wallowing gifts and gains from the seines shone fresh and dancing in the forenoon sun. There was no sort of possibility of blinding their eyes to the miracle. They recognized the divine presence instantly. And with a great shamefaced admission of folly they now remembered what they had all said together upon the bank, when they had asserted it as a positive fact that not even Jesus could catch fish in Lake Gennesaret after sunrise!

“When Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus’ knees, saying, Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord. For he was astonished, and all that were with him, at the draught of the fishes which they had taken; and so were also James and John, the sons of Zebedee, which were partners with Simon.”

How suggestive such testimony is! Those who best understood the miracles of Jesus Christ, admired them most. We have here the opinion of experts; these fishermen had spent their lives on that sheet of water. They knew whether this haul was gained by natural means or by power of divine interposition. They were “astonished,” so Luke says. And that word means wonder-stricken, or thunder-struck. Their notions beforehand were like all other skeptical notions; they seemed the concentration of wisdom and the actual embodiment of logic. But they left divine intervention out of the calculation. Hence the witness of those fishermen, after the event, is very valuable; for they may be trusted in giving testimony

to fact, when the acknowledgment humbled them so much.

But now, while the men are looking at the fish, it is better for us to be looking after instruction. We pause tranquilly in the story, just where we are. The partners push off with a most profitable load, and hasten to reach the usual market for their unusual spoils. And we cannot doubt that, among the fish-wives of Capernaum, before the going down of the sun, there were told some most exciting tales of a marvelous draught which Simon's boat had brought in, made out in the deep water, and some time in the forenoon.

We have already learned that no discouragement lying in the way of a clear command, has any force whatever to relieve men from responsibility. We need to put with that this other lesson, which is taught us here; namely, that unhesitating obedience is at once the condition and the pledge of thorough success.

That is to say, when duty meets a man fairly, he cannot succeed unless he implicitly heeds the call. But if he does heed it, he may be sure he will succeed. And the reason is found in one important fact: Jesus himself goes in the boat which he requests his disciples to launch forth upon the deep. One great word rings in the ears of the church: "Lo, I am with you always." That assurance makes everything possible to an unfaltering faith. The true-hearted believer receives Christ's promise with an exultant cry of confidence: "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me!" The disciples alone

did not catch the fish that day. A Presence with them was what summoned the shoal and gave them their boat-load. One single principle lies at the bottom of our religious life: we must put Christ our Master on before us, as the Israelites put the Ark of the Covenant when they entered the Jordan.

CHAPTER XIV.

“HITHER! BEHIND ME!”

When we announce as the theme of our study, the call of a Galilean fisherman to the ministry of Jesus Christ, we expect to meet almost at once some wonderful sight. For we remember how constantly a supernatural endorsement seems to have been given, whenever any servant of God was to be suddenly summoned to conspicuous duty.

Thus, when Moses was put in the leadership of Israel, and Aaron was joined with him to make the speeches, two miracles were immediately wrought to confirm the confidence and impress the hearts of these brothers in their acceptance of so vast a charge. And so, when Isaiah was called to be “the evangelic prophet,” he was surprised with a most marvelous and magnificent vision of the Almighty throned in the temple. Even Paul, positively sightless for the three dark days in Damascus, was healed only by the providential opening of his eyes by Ananias through miraculous help.

So here in this New Testament story, we find that when Simon son of Jonas was to be permanently commissioned to the apostleship, a great sign was wrought by the power of God to awaken and impress his mind with the dignity of such an office. It is the divine purpose of all miracles to arrest the attention of men, and thus give force and authority to any message which those miracles may accompany.

Hence they ought to be studied in direct connection with everything which is stated, before and after. John Foster aptly compares miracles to the strokes upon the bell of the universe, meant primarily to announce the momentous sermon which is to follow.

Here, then, we must remember that this miracle (like all others of Christ) is a parable; for he is seeking to secure a figure with which to make an abiding impression upon the imaginations of those Capernaum fishermen. And in order to do this, he enters the sphere of life with which they are most familiar. This is the import of that quaint antithesis with which some of the old divines used to point their comments on this portion of the gospel history: "Peter now, in taking, will himself get taken!"

When we left Simon last, he was kneeling at the feet of Jesus in his own boat, some little distance out upon Lake Gennesaret. He was frightened and astonished. His boat was filled with fishes, but the frail craft was beginning to sink; the prosperity overwhelmed him. Moments of highest triumph are not always moments of highest safety, nor even of highest satisfaction. We heard this man repeating words which he could not understand without spiritual explanation:

"Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!"

Most unaccountable prayer; and yet eminently characteristic! Simon Peter never believed in half measures. His impulses were often rash and often reckless; but they were always tremendously logical, according to the way in which he reasoned. They

frequently rushed him on to the most alarming conclusions. This exclamation, so startling and preposterous, had, however, some good in it.

For, first of all, when Simon saw the divinity of Jesus Christ fully disclosed, he acknowledged it immediately. He applied to an undoubted man the name of LORD—the one ineffable and incommunicable Name which every intelligent Israelite knew belonged to Jehovah alone. Indeed, the New Testament translation of Jehovah is in Greek—the LORD. The Jews used to be awfully afraid of that name. It was a saying of theirs that if any man pronounced it profanely, God would take away from him his part in a future state. But this fearless fisherman—the same one who afterwards told Jesus, “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God”—was not any such man as to hold back from the pressure of truth. So in one splendid instant of vast discovery, he deliberately called Jesus of Nazareth, Jehovah. It was the first of those grand confessions, which Simon kept making all along the way as he lived and learned.

But the next thing in Simon’s exclamation to arrest attention is the astonishing request he makes that Jesus should go away from him at once! He says “Depart from me!” How could the Saviour depart even if he had been willing, out there in the middle of the lake? How singular was the argument, which this frightened man insisted on pressing! “I am a sinful man, O Lord!” If he had discovered he was guilty before God’s law, to whom else could he

go a penitent for pardon? Who besides Jesus could help him? Simon eventually learned all that. For in answer to a high challenge on one special occasion: "Will ye also go away?" he replied: "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life!"

What sublimity there is in this early confession of faith by Peter, and yet what deprecation and mistake in his attitude of supplication! But we presume the process of his mind can be analysed.

This admission of Jesus' Godhead involved unutterable consequences. He felt himself vile in the presence of Jehovah. And if vile, he had no right at all to claim or to continue companionship. What was he, that he could bear to confront infinite purity, which always dwelt with infinite power? And if he had no right to share this nearness to God, the least he could do must be to relinquish and dismiss it. So he said explosively, Depart from me, for I am a sinner! Meantime, we see, what perhaps Peter did not fully appreciate then, that all this experience was just that at which Christ was aiming in the miracle. For, as good Matthew Henry suggests in commenting upon this passage, "Those whom Christ designs to admit to the most intimate acquaintance with him, he first makes sensible that they deserve to be at the greatest distance."

True conviction of sin will be better wrought in the experience of any wrong-doer by an exhibition of God's character, God's law, and God's love, than by a detailed and particular series of indictments marshaled against him out of the memories of his fellow-

men. This consideration helps us to explain Peter's demeanor.

He seems to have been aroused, and at the same moment abashed, like Jacob at Bethel, when he saw the vision of the ladder. Jacob recognized the fact that God Almighty was dealing with him; so he felt crushed by the contact. Jacob's reflection was Simon's: "Surely the Lord is in this place; and I knew it not."

We can imagine that there came to Simon Peter a most overpowering sense of his own defiled and hitherto valueless life; a profound experience of personal guilt needing a Saviour; a deep reverence and awe, which fairly prostrated him under the weight of mingled grief and terror. The finite had for one supreme moment been in the radiance of the infinite; it had touched the standard of ineffable holiness, and trembled at its own littleness and exposure.

We may as well look a little further on in the story, in order to know precisely how this experience ended. We learn, a few verses after, that the Saviour replied in tones of tenderness and encouragement, "Fear not." It is likely he offered his hand to his disciple, and took him up from clinging to his knees, soothing his excited feelings with words of kind reassurance. There always is forgiveness with Jesus, as well as reprobation of sin—forgiveness that he may be feared. He never did depart from any penitent soul which said to him, "I am a sinful man, O Lord!" Nobody in the world would have been more disappointed and surprised than Peter himself, if his absurd

request had been precipitately granted, and Jesus had taken him at his word and left him in the boat alone. We all make very foolish and very ruinous prayers, sometimes; it is well we have a considerate Redeemer, who knows how to treat them.

Surely, most of us now understand that our Lord had been intelligently working this miracle in order to bring Simon Peter exactly to the confession he had volunteered. The feeling which his action had designed to produce was therefore reached. And no one can think, without sympathy and profound interest, of those solemn, awe-struck moments that succeeded, as this fisherman took his wonted place at the oars, and sedately pulled in for the shore. Simon could never thereafter be such a man as he had been hitherto. For he had supposed he knew what it was to enter the service of Christ. He now perceived how far short of the reality he had reached. One day's education in the school of miracle had fully opened his eyes to the solemnity of his work, and the reality of his weakness.

Returning to our study of this story, we find that when Jesus had said "Fear not" to Peter, he added also, "Follow me." Singular enough is the connection between such comforts and counsels, all through the New Testament. The best motto for an entire Christian consecration in life is just this: "Fear not, but follow."

Our English translation is poor and tame, although positively accurate, when compared with the ejaculatory vigor of the expression Christ employed. What

is rendered in Mark's gospel, “Come ye after me,” is the same as that which is rendered in Matthew's gospel, “Follow me.” But the original words are simply two particles of calling—as it were, mere gestures of language—“Hither! Behind!” What our Lord exclaimed exactly was this: “Here! after Me!” No doubt he gesticulated as he spoke. So the lesson may go compactly together for all time. Two strokes of the hand, a beckon and a pointing, and two words of the Master—that settles forever a Christian's place; that demands instantly a Christian's acquiescence; that ensures positively a Christian's success. Christ says to each one of us: “Come here; put yourself behind me!”

It is evident, when we put alongside of Luke's narrative the few details offered by the other evangelists, that our Lord included in this call not only Simon and Andrew, but James and John also, their neighbors in Bethsaida, and their business partners upon the lake. It would appear as if the others of the party had occupied themselves with bringing in the mass of fishes which had been caught, and had rowed ashore with their load at once, leaving the remaining boat to come in more leisurely, Simon alone pulling oars. But by the time he arrived, they had got out their nets, which had been badly broken, and were mending their strands before spreading them again on the beach to dry. It is most likely that it was precisely at this moment Jesus said to them all, “Come ye after me.”

Let us for a few moments carefully contemplate that

group of men in their fishing-clothes. They are the nucleus of the New Testament church. They are the first unconscious princes in Christendom. Two lessons will come to our view, and will prove thoroughly worth the notice we give them; the peremptory call to entire consecration, and the immediate acquiescence which it then met.

We ought to know all those fishermen by this time. Let each one of them now come into the picture; trace out every line in the sun-burnt features; we are to meet them often hereafter. Three of them will enter history especially this morning. That strong, sinewy figure, with gentle face and calm eye, his hair long—we have known it in all the paintings, though just where the likeness came from it would be difficult to tell—is easily seen to have a sort of family resemblance to the grave, sedate man, who in that loaded vessel just now pulled the heaviest oar; the one with the tranquil mien, with the crisp iron-gray beard, slow of speech, a practical, almost commonplace talker, given to deeds rather than feelings or words, dignified even at this excited moment of intense wonderment, as he looks on the swirling mass of the forenoon spoils. These we recognize as James and John, the two sons of Zebedee.

Now first they appear in the presence of Jesus, Master and Redeemer of them all, as Peter full of emotion, every muscle of his countenance showing the solemnity of the lesson he had just learned from the miracle, pulls his little boat up on the beach.

These three men—when will they all be with Jesus

again? A solemn question, but with easy answer. On three more occasions of exciting interest; and then we may be sure there will be something quite as wonderful as anything they have seen to-day; when Christ shall raise the maiden daughter of Jairus from the dead; when the Son of God shall be transfigured upon the summit of the mountain apart, and appear with Moses and Elias; when Jesus shall mourn and wrestle in agony beneath the olives of Gethsemane; these same men, chosen three of chosen twelve, will be his sole companions.

Oh, the unseen future which lies just before them all! Most strangely those three great lives have floated up on the sea of eternal purpose, close to a Life which is greater still! They will never be entirely swept away from their Lord or each other again. For weal or woe, for silence or speech, for joy or sorrow, for earnest work or quiet resting, these four—Jesus, who is the Christ, Cephas, and the two Boanerges—are one. Jesus and Simon Peter in the end will be crucified; James will be beheaded; John will still live on long enough to see all the rest die before him, and will await his summons in dreary exile upon a rock island of the sea.

Not all of them surmise this now. The water shines luminously while the day advances; the sunlight falls over the white buildings on the shore, and traces short shadows on the sand; the hills of Gadara across are brown and hazy; villagers are coming down for the wonderful news; there stands Immanuel with the chosen three.

We must move on with the story. Jesus said, "Come ye after me." They knew what that call meant, but they met it without hesitation: "And when they had brought their ships to land, they forsook all and followed him." To these words, which Luke gives us, Matthew and Mark add one other, "straightway," most significant as showing the immediateness of their response to the peremptory summons: "they forsook all."

So we find there was immense reach in that single word which the two evangelists use—"straightway." Without so much as appearing to look at each other for united consent, they broke their partnership, took up instant duty, and followed Christ as he said: "For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called." These were only four inconspicuous fishermen of Galilee. But what could they have done more, if they had been three Magi from Persia with their minds crowded with knowledge of the stars? All that is heroic in humanity was stirred in their breasts. Yet not one sign of foolish bravado did they display. They made no ostentatious expressions of scorn of the world or its comforts. They were not an uneasy band of adventurers seeking a new excitement. Calmly these disciples gave all they had to hard work and sober duty.

Such people move the race. They arouse the age in which they live. These fishermen did it. A little further on in the history, we read that the chief accusation leveled against such preachers among the

heathen, was that they turned the world upside down!

“Then said Jesus unto his disciples, if any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me. For whosoever will save his life, shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it.”

CHAPTER XV.

FISHERS OF MEN.

“Now as he walked by the sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea: for they were fishers. And Jesus said unto them, Come ye after me, and I will make you become fishers of men.”

In this story, now becoming so familiar to us all, our Lord Jesus Christ offers a most beautiful illustration of the truth he is attempting to teach. He is fishing for men at the very moment he tells those fishermen he is going to make them fishers of men.

Simon Peter is about to enter a new profession now, which after all will prove to be the old one with a changed purpose. This is announced to him by Jesus in the use of a figure of speech, the most significant that could be employed. If we spend a few sentences in explaining the reason for such language, we shall be in better position for tracing out the strong analogies suggested by the art of fishing, when it is used as a symbol of Christian endeavor.

We have made a careful distinction between Simon Peter's conversion and his commission to the public work of the ministry; for these two things were not the same to any of the disciples, nor to any of us are they the same. A great many people in the world are called to become Christians, who are not expected to become preachers. It is significant that our Lord retains here, as well as during nearly all

his association with Simon recorded in the New Testament, his old name, although he promised him the new one of Peter. He still looked upon him as the son of Jonas, and suffered no glamour of mystery to be flung around him. An official ordination to the apostolate as such is to be dated a while later, most likely, if we wish to be strictly accurate. But these fishermen withdrew from their occupations, and commenced service that very hour.

If it ever be one's honest wish to do good to any man, to impart to him profitable instruction, he must persistently strive to fasten that which the man does not know upon something which he is sure he does know. Ready access requires, and ready tact will discover, an ally within the soul of each listener. Nothing alarms a rude or ignorant person so much as an abrupt reminder of his ignorance. Nothing propitiates a pupil or a hearer so surely as the recognition of even some slight information he may be presumed to be possessed of concerning the matter in hand. There is wisdom in an old distich of poetry, which modern philosophers quote so often:

“Men must be taught as though you taught them not,
And things unknown proposed as things forgot.”

Thus, through all the Bible history we shall find an adroit ingenuity in use to bring men to duty, to show them their sin, and to make permanent impression of God's commands upon their consciences and hearts. Figures are drawn from previous experiences.

The eastern Magi were astronomers; so they were guided to Jesus by a star. The Samaritan woman sat by the well whence she was accustomed to fetch water every day; and we remember that our Lord talked to her about the water of life. The greedy multitudes were thronging him for mere food, after the miracle of feeding the five thousand; and we have all read that fine discourse he preached subsequently to them concerning the bread that comes down from heaven. Even in the Old Testament, one of the psalms shows the analogy between king David's early occupation as a shepherd's lad in Bethlehem, and his later history when he pastured Israel like a flock:

“He chose David also his servant, and took him from the sheepfolds: he brought him to feed Jacob his people, and Israel his inheritance. So he fed them according to the integrity of his heart; and guided them by the skilfulness of his hands.”

In like manner here: we, who have already traced out the details of the narrative, can plainly discern that Jesus was capturing Peter and Andrew, John and James, with a bright figure derived from their daily work. Some will like the words as they have been recorded by Luke better than those given us by Matthew or Mark in the same connection, though they signify very much the same thing: “And Jesus said unto Simon, Fear not: from henceforth thou shalt catch men.” For in these there is a promise, as in all of them there is a commission. A man may be an angler by profession, and still find himself at times unsuccessful. Jesus here says emphatically to every

one of those disciples, as to Peter, "Thou shalt catch men."

The ancient heretic, Julian, caviled at this simile, and often tried to be quite witty and sarcastic over it. He used to say:

"Oh, yes: the clergy are all like enough to Peter in his business, if that is what apostolical succession consists in! Every one goes fishing for men; for they live on the men they catch just as he did on the fishes. They take silly creatures, and then they pretend they hear a voice, saying, 'Arise, Peter, kill and eat!'"

Pretty sharp cavil that! Only it happens that the sneer finds a singular rebuttal and rebuke in the specific term employed here by our Lord. This Greek word rendered "catch" occurs only twice in the New Testament—here, and in the epistle to Timothy. And a curious grouping of etymological forces in little particles gives to it an exact meaning which reverses the cavil; it signifies—to take in order *to keep alive*. In the other passage we recognize an acceptance of the position precisely; for it is translated there to recover one's self out of the snare of the devil. So this indecent fling of a ribald tongue falls harmlessly to the ground: like some mean bird, that dashed against the window of a light-house and dropped down among the stones with its wing broken.

It was in this redemptive sense that primitive Christians accepted the figure. They actually called themselves "fishes," to show they had been "taken" and saved. Perhaps there is no one among the modern

discoveries, which antiquarian research has offered in our times, as having been found in the remains of those apostolic ages, more interesting than the epitaphs etched on the stone slabs and tombs in the Catacombs beneath the city of Rome. Christians and heathen were buried there in promiscuous association. Under those violent persecutions, which raged more than once, it was not considered safe to mark the graves of believers so as that the barbarians would know them. And yet such simple-hearted followers of the Lord Jesus wanted to recognize the faith in which their beloved friends died; so they drew the figure of a fish on the stone.

Hence to them this had a double meaning. For the Greek name for fish is "Ichthus;" and these five letters (*ch* and *th* are one letter each in that alphabet) are the initials of five words, and they mean, "Jesus Christ, God's Son, Saviour." So this was one way in which, in such hard days, men loved to profess their belief, and even after the struggle of death record it cut deeply into the overhanging rocks underground; they were fishes caught and saved.

Now when our Lord applied this name of "fishers of men" to workers like these before him, he put within the reach of their understanding—and within the reach of ours—all the aims and all the ingenuities of their handicraft, for the sake of awaking their imaginations. Hence, we have the right to search after his entire instruction by an analysis. What is it to "catch men?"

It would be interesting, perhaps, as a mere gratifi-

cation of curiosity, to study how the mystic and spiritualizing commentators of all ages have fairly reveled in the luxurious wealth of real or fancied particulars, upon which they conceive this most simple figure to turn. They sagely inquire about the forms of the nets, and the shapes of the meshes—the multitudinous kinds of hooks, lines, and baits—until one is wearied by the array of professional technics. It will not be to any advantage for us now to go further in the investigation of analogies than just to mention these two: the purpose that all true fishers cherish, and the temper they keep.

What do people go a-fishing for? As to purpose, there needs one statement alone to make it clear. Fishermen aim and expect to *catch fish*. Hardly any calling in the world allows of so slight a margin. There seems to be only one thing in it: men fish for fish.

The experts, who are best acquainted with the art of angling, as applied to the serious work of bread-winning for a family, have a perfect contempt for all new-fangled notions, and all fastidious theories of too much civilization. They insist that modern fishes are precisely the same creatures that primitive fishes were in the next year after the flood. So the day of experiment has passed already, and the matter has been reduced to a science. Patent flies and ingenious spoons receive no sort of welcome from those weather-beaten men who get a living off the water. They labor, too much in dead earnest to trifle with feathers or toy with a piece of silver.

Nor are even the inexperienced willing to admit any other estimate. Our summer amusements demand the acknowledgment of the necessity. One may drive up to the verandah after his day's adventure, and all his wise boasting about beautiful sunshine, excellent exercise, pleasant company, crystal atmosphere, delightful rowing, goes for naught. The moment his enthusiasm lapses into silence even for a breath, some quiet questioner will be sure to come up and touch his basket with those embarrassing words, "What did you get?" And if the pouch is empty, then the day is irretrievably lost, the taunt is against him, and the reproach is acknowledged just.

This point, prosaic and ordinary as it seems to be, is pivotal to the figure of our Lord. These men were surrendering forever a definite calling, the rules of which they knew. Putting the new office of preaching the gospel to sinners under the guise of their old occupation reduced it to their plain understanding. They must have comprehended absolutely from this moment that they were going out fishing in the turbulent waters of this world for souls.

The gospel has no end or aim, that can be possible to it, besides this of the salvation of men. All Christian effort looks to that and nothing else. Hence each worker of intelligence ought to be on the alert to go where fishes are, if he fishes for men. For he has not been sent out merely to flirt the line, or lay the pretty decoy, or plant the net; he has been sent for souls; the day is lost, if he does not bring in souls of men. All toying, all pleasure-seek-

ing, is wide of this errand. No angler ever sat under the flicker of the torch, or rowed beneath the gloom of the midnight, no man ever floated over unpromising waters, with a serener faith, or with a more earnest, more downright, sense of business in his mind, than these true laborers in gospel work. If they do not see souls coming within their reach, if they do not take souls, time is lost, skill is lost, souls are lost, and they are lost.

Said Matthew Henry: "I would think it greater happiness for myself to gain even one soul to Christ, than mountains of gold and silver; if I do not gain souls, I shall enjoy all other gains with very little satisfaction." So likewise said John Bunyan: "In my preaching, I could not be satisfied, unless some fruits did appear in my work." Said Doddridge, also: "I long for the conversion of souls more sensibly than for anything besides; methinks I could labor for it not only, but die for it with pleasure." This is what all fishers of men agree in asserting. And it ought to be true of each one of them as it was of Alleine, concerning whom his biographer remarks, with pardonable enthusiasm in speech, "He was infinitely and insatiably greedy of the conversion of souls."

Add to this, now, some few illustrations as to the temper in which this great work should be carried on, and our conceptions of Christ's figure are complete. It includes patience, alertness, and tact.

Patience comes first. Enthusiasts with the hook and line assure us that nothing is more trying to one's temper than to lose a fish, after having waited for an

hour to get it fairly hold of the bait ; and yet, nothing is more fatal to success than losing temper under the failure. This much every preacher in a pulpit, and every Christian worker in a community, knows for himself: when a long struggle of faith and prayer has at last seemed to give promise of a soul, there is no more discouraging experience than just that of the disappointment under some freak of human perversity, or some evil and deadly wile of the adversary, that effects a sudden release.

But it does no good to be provoked. Reproaches would avail no more in restoring the grand result than a spiteful flinging of stones into the water would help in rehooking a lost fish.

We have learned that the word "catch" in this narrative is found in one other place. In that passage, which had better be adduced now in detail, and in its connection, the apostle gives this pertinent counsel, covering the whole process of dealing with men :

" And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient: in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth, and that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will."

Old Doctor Miller used to tell his students this: " Young men, the very earliest condition of success in the pulpit is civility." We cannot force people to act even in their own interest; tranquil forbearance

and persistency will sometimes retrieve a failure that violence and denunciation would only fasten for the future.

Then comes alertness: "They watch for your souls." In the story now under our eye, Simon Peter intimated that it would do no good to go out on Lake Gennesaret in the forenoon, nor to cast a net in deep water; fish did not run at such times nor in such places. He was right; and that was what proved the working of the miracle. He had been a diligent observer, and so showed he knew that business. Circumstances have much to do with promise of success.

That principle would hold absolutely, if any one was exhaustively acquainted with this other business of saving souls. In the world of mind, however, the moods of men are as various as the men themselves. And it is not everybody that knows everything. Providence may be relied upon to give us a chance, if only we keep looking for it and waiting for it. Crossing London Bridge, possibly a few of us have particularly noticed now and then an old man, seated quietly upon one of the piers, rod in hand, and beside him miscellanies of living bait and curious flies of feather. When we returned at nightfall, there he was still, undisturbed by the tumult and roar of the thousands of carriages and hacks. Perhaps he made no show in his basket; perhaps, when we questioned him, he confessed he had caught no spoils as yet, he denied any charge of personal unskilfulness, he told us how he had been trying a score of ingenious de-

coys, he forced us to admire his assiduity; but, above everything else, he sent us away from his side pondering his cheerful words, as we parted: "Well, if I keep it up, I always catch a fish of one sort if I do not of another, before I start for home."

Such a spirit as that will in the end bring in fruits of success. Try one thing, and then try another; then expect one person will be brought in, or another; for that is the apostolic example:

"For though I be free from all men, yet have I made myself servant unto all, that I might gain the more. And unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law; to them that are without law, as without law (being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ), that I might gain them that are without law. To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak: I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some."

Next comes tact. In this tumultuous life of ours, it is the part of a wise man to keep himself informed as to opportunities of usefulness. There are felicities of time—place—words—occasion—every one of which is worth a day's work to learn. All waters are not alike. All fishes are not the same. Some seasons are better than others. And, when boisterous talkers are around, less fuss and more fishing will better fill the basket.

To know how to do a thing is one prodigious step

towards the doing of it. Oh, if we could force ourselves to gain a fitting conception of what it is to save a soul—how difficult and delicate—just to save one soul, we should be content to skill ourselves passionately and alertly for years, if need be, in angling for it!

We must learn human nature—other people's and our own. We must grow apt to note the signs of spiritual weather. We must become discerning and quick and enthusiastic. For again let it be said—and again—that all is lost, unless in the end we save men. It matters nothing at all what fails one moment, if something else succeeds the next. Only we are to persist in trying expedients of every sort. Said the sainted Brainerd, making a review of his busy years: "I cared not where or how I lived, or what hardships I passed through, so that I could but gain souls to Christ. While I was asleep I dreamed of such things, and when I waked the first thing I thought of was this, of winning souls for Christ."

CHAPTER XVI.

SIMON'S WIFE'S MOTHER.

After his marriage, Simon Peter made his home in Capernaum. One day there was in this disciple's history in which events of the greatest magnitude thickened around him. Never had he a Sabbath more crowded with instruction, or more plainly designed to wield an important influence over his whole life. For, after the miracle in his boat, he was granted the unusual distinction of another miracle in his house on one of his family.

The mother of his wife was exceedingly ill; Jesus rebuked the fever; she was cured instantly, and took up her duties in the household at once.

“And he arose out of the synagogue, and entered into Simon's house. And Simon's wife's mother was taken with a great fever; and they besought him for her. And he stood over her, and rebuked the fever; and it left her. And immediately she arose and ministered unto them.”

It will strike everyone's mind that this record is surprisingly brief for an incident so august. The instruction of it, however, is unusually extensive upon some unexpected points where we need help.

Let us ascertain what it teaches concerning this noted apostle, Simon Peter. Here comes out the fact that he was a married man, and his mother-in-law lived with him in the same dwelling. We might

touch such an incident in the biography of any other individual with the mere comment of approval, "Marriage is honorable in all," and then pass on to matters of greater spiritual interest. In relation to any one else it would be necessary to do nothing except quote the command: "Let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband."

And then we might find it to edification to draw the picture of the honest fisherman's home, and show how well the son of Jonas was fitted to his new lot as soon as he was called to be a preacher and officer in the church of Christ. Everyone knows the text:

"This is a true saying, If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work. A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behavior, given to hospitality, apt to teach; one that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity; for if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?"

But just here we are met with the astonishing statement by some that *celibacy* is the true saintly condition for all ministers in the New Testament church. And this is enforced by a great hierarchy which openly pronounces such as do not adhere to it "heretics," at the same moment when it proclaims this familiar fisherman to have been the first pope! Furthermore, it was deliberately put on record some six hundred years after Peter was dead and buried, that he divorced his wife on his entering the priesthood. As

a proof of this, it is urged now from this very story that his mother-in-law, and not his wife, arose and did the ministering to the men. Such people would have us believe that Simon had put her away during those two or three days that had elapsed since the miraculous draught of fishes, and that this was his first Sabbath alone! Perhaps it is just as well to leave this absurd inconsistency to be explained by those ecclesiastics who hold marriage to be one of the sacraments.

Then, after about the same lapse of time, it was enjoined upon all ecclesiastics in the papal communion that they should live lives of perpetual seclusion from domestic ties, and reject marriage as a snare. These enactments were put in force in the eleventh century, since which date all priests of every order, so it is said, have been forbidden to marry. It was what Paul the apostle predicted, to be sure: but he enumerated the prohibition of marriage as among the characteristics of an apostate church, which denied the faith once delivered to the saints:

“Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their conscience seared with an hot iron; forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth.”

That celibacy is indeed a “doctrine of devils” no one can deny who has read the testimony of such

as have known the private annals of nunneries and monastic institutions the world over for near a thousand years. The results of such unscriptural teaching have been simply appalling. Sensuality and lust, vice and villany of every sort, have come invariably in its train to show its falseness.

But leaving the perversion, and returning to the fact, it is offered at once as a most interesting question: What do we know of this woman who was cured? And we are constrained to reply, that no record of her history appears anywhere in the Scriptures before or after this brief paragraph. Indeed, her whole importance historically is owing to her relationship to this famous apostle. It rarely happens that a great man's name strikes back through two generations; but it is a palpable fact here, that all the reputation given to this woman over the others healed by miracle in Capernaum rises from the incident of her having been the mother of Simon Peter's wife, and living with him.

But there is something to be said concerning the wife herself, and this is of special importance. There is reason to believe that she remained a most faithful companion and fellow-worker with Peter, whom Paul always calls "Cephas," down to the end of her life. For in one of Paul's epistles an allusion is made to her; he says, "Have we not power to lead about a sister, a wife, as well as other apostles, and as the brethren of the Lord, and Cephas?" This was written more than twenty years after Christ's resurrection, when Peter was an old man. As a

comment upon the verse, Clement of Alexandria adds: "Peter and Philip had children, and both took about their wives in order that they might act as their assistants in ministering to women at their own homes; by their means the doctrine of the Lord penetrated without scandal into the privacy of the women's apartments."

Among all the legends of the Apostle Peter there is found, now and then, one which makes for truth, and confirms the Scripture narratives. And while we may refuse to accept these as records of actual fact, we are at liberty to quote them as interesting incidents, which in some particulars are likely to be true. It is stated that this devout and excellent woman closed her eventful life by martyrdom in the city of Rome; that she was well known in the primitive Church; that she had a daughter, called Petronilla; and that her own name was Concordia, or, as some say, Perpetua. Even the circumstances of her death are detailed. And it is related, as an illustration of the marriage of that blessed pair, and the perfect agreement between them in those things which were dearest to both, that at the last solemn moment, when Peter beheld his wife led out to her suffering, he "rejoiced at her calling of the Lord, and her conveyance to her heavenly home; so that he cried out to her encouragingly and comfortingly, addressing her by name, 'Oh, remember thou the Lord!' Thus she was supported in constancy to the end."

Now comes another question: Did this Christian

woman herself have any children? It is best to leave the discussion as to the relationship of Mark for another occasion, which will be presented at the time of our study of the gospel which bears his name. But the final salutation of Peter's epistle contains these familiar words: "The church that is at Babylon, elected together with you, saluteth you; and so doth Marcus, my son." This passage has always been admitted to be obscure. Many of the soundest scholars believe the introduction of the words in *Italics*, as they appear in our version, to be unauthorized; they say there is no reference to a church, but that the term rendered "elected together" refers to a woman, who sends salutation. Of course the likelihood is that this was Simon's wife, who, being with him, and being a Christian also, naturally added her greeting to his. And, furthermore, they urge that the expression in the same connection, "Marcus my son," is literal, and means "my son Mark." That is to say, many persons think that the evangelist Mark was the actual son of the Apostle Peter. The New Revision renders the whole verse thus: "She that is in Babylon, elect together with you, saluteth you; and so doth Mark my son."

Mention has been made of the legend of "Petronilla;" and most readers of the "History of Sacred and Legendary Art" will recall the account as it there appears in the translation from the Latin.

Thus the story runs: The Apostle Peter had a daughter born in lawful wedlock, who accompanied him in his journey from the East. Being at Rome

with him, she fell sick of a grievous infirmity, which deprived her of the use of her limbs. And it happened that as the disciples were at meat with him in his house, one said to him:

“Master, how is it that thou, who healest the infirmities of others, dost not heal thy daughter Petronilla?”

“It is good for her to remain sick,” replied her father, perhaps thinking of the discipline which the pain might bring to her.

But, that they all might see the power that was in the word of God, he commanded her to get up and serve them at table—which she did. And having done so, she lay down again, helpless as before. A few years afterward, however, being perfected by her long suffering, and praying fervently, the maiden was permanently healed.

To this incident is added another. Petronilla was wonderfully fair; and Valerius Flaccus, a young and noble Roman, who was a heathen, became enamored of her beauty, and sought her to be his wife. He being very powerful, she feared to refuse him; she therefore desired him to return in three days, and promised that he should then carry her home. But she prayed earnestly to be delivered from this peril; and when Flaccus returned in three days with great pomp, for the celebration of the marriage, he found her dead. The company of nobles who attended him carried her to the grave, in which they laid her, crowned with roses. And Flaccus lamented greatly.

It is refreshing to turn from the mere poetry of a

legend to the serene majesty of history. And we come back to the inspired record in order now to note the details of this miracle, and show in what particulars it is a parable for the spiritual cure of souls.

It would seem that this fisherman, now become a disciple, had kept an open house for his Bethsaida neighbors; for we read that Zebedee's sons, James and John, were with Simon and Andrew on this remembered occasion. They had not yet "forsaken" this home, but they had certainly consecrated it to the Master's occupation and use.

Luke tells us that this woman was sick of a "great fever;" he was a physician, and he knew she was in extreme peril. Mark says, "Anon they tell Jesus of her." Then Luke adds again, "They besought him for her." Matthew relates that our Lord "touched her hand." To that Mark adds that he "lifted her up;" and Luke goes on to say, "He rebuked the fever." Then Mark states that the sickness "immediately left her;" and Luke adds further that "she arose immediately and ministered unto them." Thus, by comparing all the accounts, we get the whole story. And now is there a lesson in almost every particular.

Was this woman sick of a great fever? Then we see how Christ is the only help, but always the sure help, in desperate cases. He is able to save bodies and souls "to the uttermost."

Did the disciples go and tell Jesus of her? Then we may note the advantage of faith in the divine and sovereign Saviour. "None but Jesus can do helpless sinners good."

Are we told that those home-friends besought the Lord in her behalf? Then we learn how necessary is fervent prayer. "For all these things will I be inquired of by the house of Israel."

Did our Saviour touch this woman's hand, and touch it only, for her cure? Then observe how delicate is the ministration of divine grace in the gospel, and be gentle with souls.

Was it the interposition of other people which availed to bring this sick creature to health? Then how fine is the office of human means and instruments with God. There is really a glorious share in the work of saving souls which he permits.

Do we notice that this woman was also lifted up by Jesus? The miracle is a parable; God never lays a commandment on any soul which he does not aid that soul in performing for him.

Did the cured woman rise at once to begin her grateful service? It is by that we know her healing was perfectly done. The good Lord never leaves body or soul half delivered from ill.

Was Simon's wife's mother satisfied to minister to Jesus Christ right off and right there? Then think how much valuable time some impatient people waste in trying to find a field of work for Christ, when most likely the best task lies nearest at hand. This woman entered "the ministry" just as truly as Simon Peter did; he preached, and she served; that was ministry.

Were these wonderful privileges misused and perverted by Capernaum? Then let all the world know and remember that it is pre-eminently a dangerous

thing to do, this disregard of the merciful manifestations of the divine presence among men. This favored town called itself, "The City by the Sea." Loftily situated upon what may have been the sunny slopes of that exact elevation where Christ delivered the Sermon on the Mount, it heard the Beatitudes, but rejected the blessings. The people saw the miracles, but turned away from the truth they were wrought to confirm; so the curse fell.

CHAPTER XVII.

JAIRUS' DAUGHTER RAISED.

All along through the Scripture record thus far, we have noticed that the daily lessons learned by Simon Peter were growing apace in majesty and impressiveness, as his divine Master advanced in the disclosure of his supreme wisdom and power. Jesus had generously relieved poverty in numberless instances, soothed pain and suffering, healed the sick, and forgiven sin to the penitent.

But further than this he had never as yet gone. There was a solitary realm of dread conflict he had not before entered that he now approached. The last enemy to be destroyed was Death.

When the hour of an attack so solemn and a triumph so vast awaited his action, it was meet that he should select from the chosen twelve a chosen three to become his witnesses. And these, fortunately, were the old friends and Bethsaida neighbors, Peter, John, and James, whom we have learned to know so well.

It appears that Jesus had been invited with his disciples to a feast in the house of a conspicuous, but not very reputable, taxgatherer in Capernaum. While he was sitting at meat, there came a man to him in great anguish. We are not informed who he was; mention is made of him only as an officer in the synagogue, a Jew, very likely of rank and influence, perhaps one of the same delegated committee of elders in Israel who had come beseeching Jesus to interpose

in behalf of the Roman centurion's servant some time previous. If he had been successful in securing so extraordinary a favor before for another, he would now certainly feel the braver and the freer in asking one for himself of the same sort.

It must have seriously mortified this magnificent ruler, however, to be obliged to go after a Nazarene prophet in the house of Levi the publican. But that has always been the way of procedure. The haughty have to bend, the rich have to surrender, and the gospel is generally to be found earliest in the hearts and the homes of the most unpromising men. "Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

This afflicted father was in most violent agitation. All of those slight confusions we find in the record may be traced plainly to this. One of the evangelists says he "fell down at Jesus' feet;" another mentions that he "besought him greatly;" Matthew states that he "worshipped him." At any rate, it is evident that he announced his trouble somewhat incoherently. He had an invalid daughter—she was all the child he had—twelve years of age. It appears that one of the disciples heard him say that his desperate case admitted no delay whatsoever: his little girl was "even now dead;" another thought he said that she "lay a-dying;" and then a third quotes the expression, "at the point of death."

Men must be hard pressed for arguments and cavils against inspired history, and are liable to overstrain their point in questioning the accuracy of

the Scriptures, when they force themselves to present these mere touches of human nature as discrepancies and contradictions among the sacred writers. Why, such a man would be likely to keep talking all the time; and what he would say, in the hurry of the crowd, in the rush of his own excited feeling, and in the confusion of rapid and anxious speech, was that his dear child was dead or dying; indeed, he could not tell which; she was at the last gasp, for what he knew, when he left her bedside; most probably she was gone now; but would the good Rabbi come over and just see if anything could be done; perhaps she could be saved yet!

“My little daughter lieth at the point of death; I pray thee, come and lay thy hands on her, that she may be healed; and she shall live.”

Did anybody ever know our Lord Jesus Christ to disappoint or deny one who trusted him truly, and asked for help? Of course, he started instantly from the table, though it was much like leaving a feast for a funeral. And now, with our knowledge of what happened, it is not hard to say whether he did not fairly convert that identical funeral into a festival better than ever was set by Jairus himself before in his sumptuous house.

The curious expectancy of the people around him, who had witnessed the demonstration and heard the request, was aroused to the highest pitch. The disciples went with him, and they were followed also by great numbers of the by-standers. The moment he pushed out into the street, “much people thronged him.”

Just here the swift current of the Bible narrative is interrupted suddenly by a new incident, out of which comes another miracle. Apparently on the very step, Jesus meets a woman in deepest distress. We cannot now pause to rehearse the tale; it is of interest enough to call for our patient study by itself.

Yet, though our Lord hesitated but an instant, every falling sand in the glass of time was to Jairus more precious than gold; a single minute of arrest might turn the scale of life and death. A real admiration for him springs up in every mind, because of his amazing fortitude in so awful an exigency. Not one word of deprecation falls from his lips; no fretfulness of spirit or gesture showing disapprobation is put on record; he simply waits his turn.

Now that we know the end, we can see that it was better that this miracle of healing should come in at that precise point in order to deepen the impression upon the minds of the fickle populace who witnessed it, and in order to quicken Jairus' faith by testing it almost to the limit of endurance. A fine reward of grace eventually was reached for this forbearance. No one ever ventured upon God his dearest interests, holding his trust unbroken, without reason for gratitude by and by.

"It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord. The Lord is good unto them that wait for him, to the soul that seeketh him."

The company now started on again, and hope began to revive anew in the heart of that distressed

father. If only the great Master would get there in time! But the stop which the procession already had made had been long enough for some one, hastening with a mournful announcement from the scene of affliction, to bring rapid tidings to the ruler that all was over; the maiden had breathed away her life; it was of no use to go on any more:

“Thy daughter is dead: why troublest thou the Master any further?”

Our Saviour, alert in listening, caught this solemn word the instant it was spoken; and, before any harmful doubt could possess the man's mind, gave him one memorable sentence of encouragement:

“Fear not: believe only, and she shall be made whole.”

Some very singular uses of individual terms here are worth a brief comment, as throwing picturesqueness into the story. We are told that Jesus “heard” the message sent from home to Jairus, although it was not addressed to him, nor even intended for him. Exactly, the word is *overheard*; and it occurs only this once in the Bible. One of our best scholars renders it thus: “Having casually overheard what was spoken.”

Then, too, the expression, “Trouble not the Master,” is exceedingly graphic. The people looked upon Jesus as an itinerant evangelist—a Messianic teacher and expositor—and so gave to him the usual name of Rabbi, which means Master. The word that is rendered *trouble* also occurs only here and in one other place, where it is employed with exactly the

same meaning and purpose. The centurion, whose servant Jesus healed, sent messengers to him to say: "Lord, trouble not thyself." It signifies *fret* or *worry*; indeed, it finds its precise equivalent in our colloquialism "bother."

Hence, the naturalness of this scene strikes us at once. An anxious member of the ruler's family comes up to him and says privately: "The little girl is dead; do not worry—or bother—the Rabbi any further; it is of no use now." Our Lord overheard this sad suggestion, and answered, "Fear not; only believe!"

In truth, Jairus' faith needed this stimulant; for when they reached the house the circumstances were desperate. Before their feet were inside of the door their ears were greeted by the sound of the hired mourners' music wildly ringing through the apartment. Quick in the instincts of their ordinary trade, they were already up and alive, playing noisily upon their exasperating instruments.

These "minstrels" at Eastern funerals make what we should call most dreadful commotion. They are almost always alert for employment. Mourning customs are merely conventional in those countries, and are governed by local fashion. In some cases professional weepers beat their breasts with frantic gesticulations, filling the house with lamentations in poetry and prose. They recite the virtues of the departed, and bewail their melancholy loss, and seek to harrow up the feelings of the standers-by. Occasionally they cut their own flesh with weapons, and rend

their garments in mock despair. The instruments they use for accompaniment are very simple ; mere flutes or reeds, making with their voices forlorn monotones of moaning in a strident and shrill key. It is said by some, however, that on great occasions they bring even trumpets or cornets of brass, and seem determined to force sorrow with uproar.

They must have expected good fees in this instance, for they were on hand betimes, and exceedingly hard at their work when Jesus arrived. And we have one hint that they were especially angry in their scorn at his words when he bade them away. He had forcibly to eject them when he entered the chamber of the dead.

All this needs to be borne in mind carefully, for it becomes valuable in relation to a doubt which has been started. Some few expositors have seemed to understand that our Lord's words are to be taken literally, when he exclaimed in expostulation :

“Why make ye this ado, and weep?—the damsel is not dead, but sleepeth.”

One of the most famous of modern preachers deliberately considers this maiden's case one of “suspended animation,” and discharges the meaning and force of our Lord's miracle as a mere “restoration from apparent death ;” then he employs the incident as a text to preach a sermon from in behalf of the Humane Society, that proposes to resuscitate all people half dead from drowning, or asphyxiated from having inhaled noxious vapors in the mines !

How strange it seems to find any misunderstand-

ing lodged upon so plain a statement as this! The messenger who met the procession said this maiden was dead. The whole company of by-standers joined in to laugh Jesus to scorn when they thought he spoke literally, "knowing that she was dead." So when we are told explicitly, "The damsel arose," the word is employed which over and over again is applied to undoubted resurrection. "Her spirit came again"—so the record reads. If this maiden was only lying in an unconscious or comatose state, why did not Jesus inform the agonized father of that fact, and relieve his unnecessary solicitude and suffering? Why did he not correct the messenger of evil tidings:

"Oh, this child is only in a trance; she will recover soon!"

No; this was Christ's way of declaring that to the believers he loves death is but a slumber; the sure waking is just beyond it. He said the same thing on the way to Bethany with his disciples:

"Our friend Lazarus sleepeth; but I go that I may awake him out of sleep. Then said his disciples: 'Lord, if he sleep, he shall do well.' Howbeit Jesus spake of his death; but they thought that he had spoken of taking of rest in sleep. Then said Jesus unto them plainly: Lazarus is dead."

So he said now that a dead damsel was asleep; and what he intended to say was that hereafter, under the Gospel, the old despairing notion of death was utterly abolished; the dawn was just ready behind

the darkness, the radiant morning beyond the solemn night.

A most interesting picture now rises upon our imagination as we return to the narrative. The dwelling is at last decorously silent and tranquil. No evidence of that ruler's faith could be offered more convincing than the unquestioning acquiescence he displays in all the instant assumption of authority by Jesus there under his own roof. The true master of the house is Christ from the moment he enters. And the proprietor interposes no word of prohibition when the vociferous minstrels are interrupted, nor even does he check their departure when they are finally turned out of their work and out of the dwelling. He knew they would not be wanted.

They enter the chamber of death; they gather around the bed. Central in the group stands the Son of God. Near him are the awe-struck parents. Behind him are three of the disciples: James, quiet and retiring; John, earnest and affectionate; Peter, more eager and forward, to see what is going on. Simon's education will progress by one vast advance to-day, for he will behold God's glory!

Seven persons only are in that room, and one of them is the maiden dead. They had most likely taken off the simple jewels she was beginning to wear, and removed the small string of silver coins she was wont to braid around her forehead: nobody imagined she was ever any more to need a dowry after this. In calm simplicity, she now lies, all faults and

foibles forgotten, straightened upon the couch where she died. We cannot help quoting the Russian proverb: "Two hands upon the breast, and labor is past." This small girl does not appear as a mere child in our eyes just now; for the King of Terrors has crowned her with the majesty of her inalienable womanhood, and thrown around her person the peerless dignity of death.

At once to the head of the bed came the weary father—that anxious, well-to-do, but helpless man, loving his only child with all his heart. One look towards him from his desolate wife, bending over the maiden, told him truly earthly hope was at an end.

But now Jesus, the Nazarene Rabbi, drew near; he took the inanimate damsel by the hand, and said unto her :

"*Talitha-cumi!*" which is, being interpreted, "Damsel! (I say unto thee) arise!"

Ah, we might have known we should hear the sweet accents of that Aramaic language now! When in the coasts of Decapolis they once brought to Christ one that was deaf, and had an impediment in his speech, he touched his tongue and put his fingers into his ears, and, looking up to heaven, he sighed, and said, "*Ephphatha*, that is, Be opened." This was the language which arrested Saul on his way to Damascus; for Jesus called him out of heaven in its words of pathetic challenge, "Why persecutest thou me!" Even when on the cross during the three hours' darkness Jesus "cried with a loud voice, saying, *Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?*" which is, being

interpreted, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Thus, whenever our Lord grew unusually or unutterably solemn, in the greatest moments of his history, he fell back upon the touching *patois* of Palestine, and used the terms of the mother-tongue in which he was born.

The remaining details of the story we are rehearsing are exceedingly graphic. Death yielded up his prey at the demand of one mightier than he. The soul of that damsel came back again to this world. Her recovery was immediate and complete. "She arose, and walked." Her parents were overwhelmed. They became "astonished with a great astonishment." Mark's words are, "They stood in a vast ecstasy." It is likely their delight was embarrassed by the depth of their amazement. When the Lord so suddenly turned again the captivity of their distress, they were like them that dreamed.

This bewilderment of awe-struck wonder mingled with fond affection was interrupted in a tranquil way by Jesus himself, whose commonplace wisdom called them to themselves with two suggestions.

He told the parents that they ought to give the feeble child something to eat. Perhaps he feared that some caviler would report she was not really alive after all, only apparently resuscitated. More likely, however, he desired to evidence that her restoration was perfect from the moment he spoke to her; she was not only living, but was well, and might now go on harmlessly with life as usual. After her long fast and the wasting of her illness, the

girl would need some sort of strengthening sustenance.

Then after that Christ commanded those around him, who witnessed the miracle, that they should not noise it abroad. Let the whole matter be kept quiet. Possibly he desired to restrain enthusiastic demonstrations on the part of his followers, and keep them from unnecessarily arousing the Jews' animosity and precipitating upon him their violence. His hour had not yet come. He may have wished also to moderate the fanatical superstition which would constitute him a mere wonder-worker, and would belittle his teaching with new clamors for more miracles. He was at the moment surrounded with village multitudes. A mighty concourse of Capernaum people were ready to exclaim again, "We have seen strange things to-day!" He needed time now for patiently instructing his followers.

Let us bear in mind that among the rest Simon Peter stood at our Lord's side during all these events. He had overheard the messenger out in the street saying that this maiden was dead; he had noticed what a temptation that announcement had offered to Jairus' faith to surrender: now what a lesson of triumph he learned! Really, it would seem as if here was where he got the fine thoughts he puts in his First Epistle, when he encourages believers to hold tenaciously to their confidence, no matter what should happen ever:

"Ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season (if need be) ye are in heaviness through manifold temp-

tations: that the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise, and honor, and glory, at the appearing of Jesus Christ."

And one thing more did Simon Peter learn on this momentous occasion, which he never forgot. It was the chief recollection that strengthened him for the mighty grasp of his faith, when alone he kneeled by the bed-side of Dorcas, and put forth his poor hand for the lifting of a dead woman into life. He learned that this sympathetic Son of Mary—Son of God—held the mastery forever over relentless Death. In his name mortality put on immortality.

We must remember, however, that this was his earliest lesson in such a behalf. Other two were to come. And the progression in these wonders is plainly perceptible. The first case of resurrection was this of one scarcely out of life, still warm with the pulses which had only just ceased beating. Then came the miracle at Nain; and the widow's son was out upon his bier, and they were actually bearing him away to burial. Then came the raising of Lazarus, four days in the sepulchre already. So the wonders grew. An only daughter—an only son—an only brother—given back again!

Think of the majesty of that moment in this world's history, when Jesus Christ declared that solemn, irrevocable death was only a Christian's sleep! Outside of that small dwelling in Capernaum, a great race of men rushed and toiled, as they harassed continents and seas; mighty events marshaled themselves

into annals and pageants. What was inside? In one inconspicuous chamber of a forgotten house, man's Redeemer, unobserved, mastered man's final enemy: Immanuel subdued death, and forever made captivity captive!

So now we can see easily why a Christian's song, like that a thousand years ago credited to the swan, is the sweetest in dying: it is because believers only say "Good night" when they die, and wait for the sure dawn in which to say "Good morning!"

"Life! we've been long together,
Through pleasant and through cloudy weather;
'T is hard to part when friends are dear,
Perhaps 't will cost a sigh or tear;
Then steal away—give little warning—
Choose thine own time—
Say not 'Good night,' but in some happier clime
Bid me 'Good morning!'"

CHAPTER XVIII.

SHEEP WITHOUT A SHEPHERD.

We must remember that whenever in the Scripture record the apostles are mentioned, during the period of their discipleship under the personal teaching of Jesus, Simon Peter is of course included; and that whenever the gospel of Mark, which he is supposed to have supervised, grows more bright and detailed than the rest, we may suppose Simon Peter's education is proceeding apace. He is gaining information which he afterward communicates.

The part of Peter's history upon which we enter now definitely connects itself with the first missionary tour which the followers of our Lord made through the villages and towns of Galilee. He is now a preacher of the gospel; he is a veritable fisher of human souls; he is a worker of miracles.

The faithful disciples of our Lord were just now on their way home to make report of what they had accomplished in Galilee. They had been traveling around among the people, casting out devils, healing the sick, and proclaiming everywhere that men must repent of their sins. Full of exhilaration and joy at their success, they were suddenly met by tidings of the greatest moment, and of the deepest grief.

From the lonely castle of Machærus came the news that John the Baptist had at last sealed his work by his martyrdom. The chosen twelve hastened back

in time to receive his mutilated remains, and lay them in the sepulchre. The great and shining light of the new dispensation had in one savage moment of lust been put out by the king, in order to gratify the spite of a wicked woman, and answer the whim of a dancing girl. These disciples felt the unutterable gloom deepening around them. It is plain that they were heavily depressed in spirits. The record is exceedingly affecting in its artless simplicity, especially in one verse which Matthew adds to the narrative in Mark: "And his disciples came, and took up the body, and buried it, and went and told Jesus."

As soon as the Saviour learned what his disciples' errand was, he made provision for a better season of quiet. No doubt the confusion which the multitudes made added to their excitement. They needed repose; they needed instruction; they needed sympathy. For they had discovered already the truth of that prediction, announced before they began their round of unappreciated service, that every true Christian was going forth as a sheep among wolves, and in the end would find himself wounded and torn to pieces. One faithful friend they knew they possessed: they could go and tell Jesus.

"And he said unto them, 'Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest awhile': for there were many coming and going, and they had no leisure so much as to eat. And they departed into a desert place by ship privately."

Unrestricted intercourse with him was utterly im-

possible anywhere in that region. An irresponsible and oppressive crowd tumultuously thronged the streets and the houses. The disciples gained no time even for the commonest and most indispensable duties of existence. They could neither eat nor sleep, simply because the curious people came and went so promiscuously around them. Possibly it will be as well to raise and answer the question here as at any other time—Where did all these multitudes come from ?

Many of them were the inhabitants of Capernaum, of course ; a seaside city has always enough to make a rabble out of. But these masses were augmented largely by mere curiosity-seekers from those villages which had communication with this market. Nor must we imagine that the audiences thronging Jesus were all mere idlers that had no errand ; many of them were believers. We know there was even then a respectable company of permanent adherents of the Master, who actually followed him from place to place, ministering in many ways to his wants, and increasing his fame by the steadfastness of their faith. Out of these the company of seventy new disciples already had been commissioned. And further, the great ebb and flow of the local people was increased at these times by excited troops of pilgrims, beginning to press along on the country thoroughfares, going up to Jerusalem for the annual Passover. They had heard concerning Jesus' miracles, and would desire to see all they could of one who boldly claimed to be the promised Messiah of the nation.

Simon Peter told Mark, so that he has put it on record, that early in our Lord's Galilean ministry precaution had been taken to have a "small ship" wait upon him, in case of a sudden emergency arising like this. There was that in the present condition of the twelve disciples, which rendered it an imperative necessity for entire rest to be allowed them. They would have to retire where the thoughtful Teacher could converse with them alone at his will.

Our picture is now full of interest. They embarked upon the calm surface of Lake Gennesaret, over which they had sailed so many times together. They were soon away from the yellow beach, and off on the water. These men knew every secluded spot in the vicinity all around the shore. They moved tranquilly along, apparently not noticing that they were eagerly watched from the town. Their steersman—most likely Simon Peter—struck his course almost directly across, towards a familiar landing on the eastern border up north, near the village of Bethsaida—that other Bethsaida, afterwards named Julias. "A desert place," this is called in the story. But we are not to understand that it was a bare, desolate, verdureless spot. It was an uninhabited and retired retreat: but in itself it seems to have been beautiful, and clothed with exuberant grass and all the luxuriance of that climate in spring. It was, doubtless, a tract of either plain or meadow, somewhat extensive, sloping pleasantly up along the declivities of the mountains of Golan, the fringes of whose covering forest came down nearly to the

beach. It was easily reached with a few hours' rowing.

Mooring their little vessel securely on the sands, the company wended their way up out of the hot sunshine into the welcome enclosure offered by the rich grove of walnuts and oaks, stretching away up the hillside before them. And now if it were possible for us to know what was the conversation which they had together, when once they had arrived within the wooded seclusion, we could easily answer each question that arises concerning their purpose in going there. But the details have not been put on record. That shadowed nook will always rivet our attention, as one of the most interesting retreats around the Sea of Tiberias. For it once sheltered our human Redeemer and his friends when they needed repose.

The most evident purpose of this temporary withdrawal of the disciples, next to the rendering of their report to Jesus, was the immediate physical and mental relief of an hour of communion alone. These faithful men had been on a long and fatiguing errand of zeal. They needed food, and they must have quiet, or they would break.

Out of this eminent example comes the most prosaic of all religious counsels. Men and women who are in the hurry of Christian work demand periods of repose and recuperation. No person is ever under obligation to wear himself out in efforts for the upbuilding of God's kingdom or the conversion of souls, any more than in anything else. In-

deed, there is a spiritual economy in labor that is of the highest wisdom in exercise. We can do more for Christ simply by doing what we do in accordance with laws of resource and exhaustion. These disciples were only human; and the fact is, their nerves were all unstrung with too much exertion; they were excited and over-taxed, perhaps alarmed and demoralized, under the news of a real instance of martyrdom. They wanted just what that shaded forest, with Jesus Christ in companionship, could furnish them in its sequestered recesses. How welcome, even for an hour, would be the songs of the spring birds upon their ears, now so wearied and ringing with the clamors of fluctuating multitudes! How refreshing on their foreheads would be the stress of the cool winds, stealing up from the water through the leaves which bent to let them pass! An idle moment for spiritual renewal under circumstances of bodily repose—just that was their necessity; and Jesus was wise enough to see that they had it without delay. **Such seasons** of tranquil meditation and personal communion with the Saviour are positively needful for the recreation of Christian vigor. It was the Bride's sad lament in the Song of Songs: "They made me the keeper of the vineyards: mine own vineyard have I not kept."

Still there was another purpose beyond this: our Lord invited his disciples away into that wood beside the sea, that he might impress upon their minds right views of the new Christian life.

No one can fail to observe that from this time for-

ward, everything in the teaching and action of Jesus himself grows thoughtful even to a sort of mournful solemnity. His mind was borne upon much by the awful murder of John the Baptist. His disciples really had no reason to be surprised by such results of faithful dealing. They had been told that the world hated them. They had considered that announcement well, or at least they thought they had. Yet when the blow fell, it gave them a shuddering shock. Their imaginations were arrested by the silence and dungeon-gloom of death in the darkness. There was something so horrible in this cutting off one's head with a blunt blow of an axe or sword. Decapitation was never practised as a method of execution. A mere wish of this wanton girl had fashioned a new and brutal sort of mutilation. An irresponsible caprice, gloating over an obscene revenge, had given a fresh turn of ingenuity to injustice. The order of doom had proceeded with such reckless abruptness; the motives which had actuated Herodias were so mean and infamous; indeed, all the circumstances that attended the execution were so unexpected and irrelevant, that they were frightened. They learned suddenly how true it was for them all that they stood in jeopardy every hour. A tenure most frail was that upon which they held their own lives. Permitted freedom from arrest was all they could claim; and now whose turn would come next?

But then we discover that, as soon as the little band had arrived, and were seated with him under

the trees, Jesus began to instruct them as to the uncertainty of all life which is truly Christian. He foresaw his own painful end, and he understood that each one of those men before him had sorrowful times coming on. No word of his can be construed to hint that they were to avoid trouble, even of the most serious kind; he only counseled them how they should deal with the troubles they had. He desired that their trials should find them prepared, brave, gentle, patient. It must have been encouraging to those men who loved him with all their hearts. He surely pointed them forward to another life than this. He made them see that the violent world would malign and oppose them; they must overcome the world; things would be better by and by. "Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless, afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby."

It is not easy to say just what our Lord did; they were interrupted by a crowd before long. But we feel perfectly satisfied that the compassionate Saviour suffered their natural emotion to find vent without any rebuke. He gave them proper indulgence in mourning over the loss of one so dear as John the Baptist. And, no doubt, they told over and over the reminiscences of his career. Where was there ever before a forerunner so brave, a preacher so faithful, a hero so noble? He was Jesus' affectionate kinsman; he had most likely baptized Andrew, Peter, and John. Christ had loved and trusted him; in-

deed, he once said publicly that John was the greatest man ever born of woman. And now we may be certain that when the disciples went and told him, he would point out to them how fine a thing it was just to be genuine and true and steady to the end. And if Simon Peter got up on his feet to say he was not going to break for all this, it would have been just like him. And if the rest thought so, and said nothing, it would have been just like them, too.

Perhaps they bowed their heads and wept; if they did, it was not un-Christian nor unmanly. "Jesus wept" once; possibly more than once. There are times when God asks nothing of his children except silence, patience, and tears. He lets them go aside, away from interruption, in order to weep till nature is relieved of her heaviest burden; then he gives "a season of clear shining that cometh after rain."

At last the quiet of their seclusion was interrupted. While the company lingered in the sweet solemnity of their communion, an increasing murmur of strange voices gathering near began to be distinguished. The unmistakable signs of an audience were in the air, floating up from the plain below. With matchless acquiescence, Jesus arose from his rest and gave signal for work once more. It is true they were all wearied; this hour was luxury; but the call was made, and Peter learned that ease must always yield to duty.

Tidings were brought to them, sitting in the shadows of the walnut-forest, that ten thousand men, women, and children (so, generally, commentators

reckon their number) were tranquilly awaiting the Saviour's reappearance, in order that, perhaps, they might listen again to the words of eternal life. We can have no doubt that every human feeling those disciples had was reluctant. Mourning over their bereavement, and fatigued with the journey through Galilee, they would have preferred to be left in peace. But there was no discharge in that war. As ever, the great, fallen, needy world rushed and roared tumultuously around them; it demanded its Redeemer; its only Hope must be followed up, even if he had retired into the mountains of Golan. When did it ever allow anybody to rest?

It is most instructive to observe that Jesus Christ does not, even in the least degree, share the impatience of those disciples. He arises serenely and instantly, saying by his action what he afterward said in speech: "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work." Oh, great, brave Life was that, addressing itself tirelessly to a thankless labor for souls that were going to reject him in the end! He who stayed in the glare of the noontide at Sychar to speak with one poor, wicked woman, with a wish to save her soul, now advanced, unhesitant as ever, forth from his solitude to make effort for a thousand. Once out from under the trees, looking down along the verdured slope clear to the beach, the disciples all saw that vast multitude. But only the emotions of their Master are recorded: "And Jesus, when he came out, saw much people, and was moved with compassion toward them, because they were as sheep

not having a shepherd: and he began to teach them many things."

There the great Rabbi stood in full view; they discovered him at one and the same instant. A wild confusion of human voices, perhaps, arose in the air. Just here this picture flashes itself upon our imagination, wonderfully fine and beautiful. Emerging from the shadows of the copse of green, the forms of their bright, flowing, garments must have been imaged against it in evident outline. Our eyes seem to see the scene. The Saviour stands a little advanced, but the faithful friends of his choice, the companions of his perils, are just behind him. Those unnumbered multitudes are surging and swaying in groups, down on the sands and along up the sides of the hill—a mighty, undisciplined audience. They have all only one center; with eager eyes each is looking upwards anxiously, just to catch a glimpse of Immanuel, and to implore his help!

Who were all these men and women? They were what are generally called *the masses*. The persistency, with which the common people continued to follow Jesus is a proof that his popularity thus far had not been lessened by the outbreak of Herodias in attacking him through John the Baptist. There they were—the world in miniature—directly before him; a harmless company, with no one to be their spokesman, no one to be their guide, no one to care for them, no one to be responsible for them. They appeared just like one of those vagrant flocks our

Lord was accustomed to see on the pasture-grounds of grassy hills. As he marked their excited looks, their aimless hurry, unfolded, unprotected, and unled, he compared the whole crowd instinctively to sheep without a shepherd. A shepherd is *everything* to sheep. It may suggest new thought to imagine now and then what the multitudes are "without," as well as what they are with; what they lack, as well as what they have. All that any shepherd could be to a helpless flock—just that they miss.

Suppose Simon Peter, standing there on the ridge of the hill, had asked, What is to be done now for this crowd? Much help would come to him, we may be sure, from a careful observation of what the Master did do. Two things would concern him; two things concern us now: how did our Lord feel, and what did he set about? What was in the Saviour's heart? And what was in his hand? Peter gave Mark the replies to these questions.

"He was moved with compassion towards them;" this exhibits Jesus' feelings. What does it mean? What is compassion? A little dry etymology, perhaps, may be permitted here. This word *compassion* comes from two Latin words, *con* signifying *together*, and *passio* signifying *suffering*. Just so, precisely, a word signifying in the Greek language *together*, and another signifying *suffering*, go in to make up our common word *sympathy*. Jesus seems to have known that what the throng before him needed most was that he should suffer together with them. Oh, that this were our experience always! The great com-

mon humanity pulses in our veins. What these masses, as we call them, these "souls," as Christ on the hillside gazed over them, want beyond every other earthly want is that this warm heart of humanity should beat with them while it beats for them.

Very suggestive is one recorded remark of the critic Ruskin: "You know," says he, "that to bestow alms is nothing unless you bestow thought also; and therefore it is written, not 'Blessed is he that *feedeth* the poor,' but 'blessed is he that *considereth*.'" "

But what did our Lord do for that multitude? Here Mark's record comes in again. "He began to *teach* them many things." That is to say, he gave up his ease; he relinquished his ineffably welcome retirement that April morning; he advanced immediately to offer them a greeting, as if he had been overjoyed at the chance of a new audience. There for hours stood that patient Master of us all, telling them of his Father's love, of the Messiah's coming, of the ransom paid for sinners, of the great life by faith, of the righteousness like a wedding garment, and the open gate of heaven. The simple story of the cross was, in all likelihood, just what he continued to repeat then as ever. Away over the world ranged his imagination to find what the kingdom of heaven was like, and home to each heart came the tender, wistful words of Him whom the common people always heard gladly, because he suffered together with all.

Simon Peter learned his lesson; his epistles are full of evidences that he never forgot this forenoon

in the mountain of Golan. Here is the unchanging errand of one who would lift the masses out of their degradation and sorrow. Turn directly and sympathetically toward the souls which are standing next to us. Treat them humanly, "moved with compassion." Then begin to "teach them many things." In the whole Bible our Lord is declared to have marveled only twice—once at the centurion, once at the Nazarenes; once at great faith, and once, more than ever, at the great lack of it.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE WALK ON THE WATER.

“And Peter went down from the boat, and walked upon the waters, to come to Jesus. But when he saw the wind he was afraid; and beginning to sink, he cried out, saying, ‘Lord, save me.’”

Among the ancient Egyptians the symbol of impossibility was the simple figure of two feet planted upon a fragment of ocean. Above all other exploits, walking on water seems to have been deemed the one thing which no mortal could do. With instinctive sense of the nature of the act, our own convictions fall into the same certainty. It is only God’s path which is “in the great waters, and his footsteps are not known.” What startles us, therefore, in this familiar narrative is the fact that a human being is out upon the waves, and the fluid floor is actually becoming firm beneath his foothold. A fisherman of Galilee suddenly forsakes his boat, steps unflinching over the side of it when the crests appear running highest along the ridge of the billows, and moves on across the lake in the very face of a tempest and in the violence of a storm!

The way in which this came about is worth noticing. After a day of miracle, employed in feeding some five thousand people, our Saviour had urged his reluctant disciples away into their vessel, and had directed them to proceed before him to the western side of the Sea of Tiberias; then he quietly turned

himself to dismiss the excited multitudes, and went up into the mountain to pray.

Meantime the night wore on into tempestuous peril, until those fishermen, although thoroughly acquainted with the lake in all its most fitful moods, grew fairly frightened with its heaving and uproar. Just then appeared the awful and majestic figure of Immanuel walking toward them on the surface of the water, treading the obedient billows under his feet. They first thought it was a spectre they saw, and they fell into superstitious alarm; but a single word of friendly announcement gave them reassurance: "It is I; be not afraid." Wonderful spectacle was that which they now beheld. Jehovah was, indeed, choosing his way in the sea; he was making darkness his secret place, and his pavilion round about him dark waters and thick clouds of the skies.

In this sublime instant of supreme disclosure, our impulsive friend Simon Peter rises in the boat to put in a characteristic appearance. Remember he now makes his home in the city of Capernaum. He has married a respectable maiden there. Serious illness has occurred just lately in his family. His mother-in-law has been very sick with a fever. Jesus healed her by miracle. Peter knew all about the sudden cure. Sometime previous to this, too, he had caught a most unprecedented haul of fishes. Indeed, he had witnessed any number of wonders already since he began to know Christ. And without doubt he must have learned to grow somewhat expectant concerning his divine Lord; things might at any moment

assume a marvelous cast. And now, when he recognizes the infinite kingliness of this supreme presentation of omnipotence, when he perceives the form of light shining in the dark, and the face of grandeur standing serene in the tempest, he suddenly seems seized with the impulsive desire to have for himself some conspicuous share in the show.

It is not worth while to renew this scene in our remembrance as if it were only a matchless picture in a supernatural drama. Every spectacle in Christ's life is a sermon. This fragment of history preaches an evangelical discourse on the subject of experimental faith at school. And we shall most likely do better to continue our study of it with a slender analysis, constructed out of the discourse rather than out of the history. We can certainly gather all the incidents around the lessons for spiritual instruction.

For example, we learn this earliest: presumption is the usual peril of an untested faith.

Simon Peter was always trying to do what no one else thought of. And, this time, he assuredly ran before he was sent. The moment Jesus' words fell on his ear, "It is I; be not afraid," Peter answered him and said: "Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water." Here we may note the intimate mingling of an earnest confidence with a wretched distrust in the form of request.

He says, "Bid me come," as if he admitted that Christ held a peculiar supremacy of command. This disciple saw he could never come, and ought not to seek to come, unbidden. But he illogically adds,

“If it be thou,” when Jesus had just said, “It is I.”

Simon Peter believed, but not much. He doubted also, but not thoroughly. That is to say, his experience appears mixed, and certainly is faulty. The instruction we shall receive from it depends upon our being able, with some degree of intelligence, to settle the precise reason why an unmasked man like this disciple wished, in the midst of storm, darkness, and peril, to leap down out of his boat upon the water, simply because he saw Christ there.

Possibly, he meant to pay an honest tribute to Jesus' omnipotence, and to do him an unusual honor. Perhaps he was curious just to see how such a wonderful feat would seem. But an easier conjecture is found in that plain personal vanity, for which in this early period of his career the son of Jonas was remarkable. We may consent charitably to consider that he was unconscious of his conceit. But the artlessness of his self-esteem in thus thrusting his weak personality into notice is almost childish. What could he possibly want to go off upon the lake for? He appears to have been simply arrested with a silly gush of wishing to start out before all the rest, stand boldly on the billows, and walk tragically in towards his audience upon the perilously tossing stage.

Let us pause long enough to lay it to heart that when we discover men and women attempting unheard-of and indescribable things, querulous and dissatisfied with the sober round of grand, every-day duty, just because it is unromantic and tiresome, we may begin openly to attribute their action to the in-

experience of their lives or the mere overweening confidence of their characters. We may watch with much solicitude for their downfall. Peter was conspicuous in this exploit for his leaping overboard at his own suggestion; some of the rest remained waiting for their Lord to speak. His summons had not arrived for the exposure; so his faith was presumptuous.

One wishes with all his heart that this indiscreet disciple had kept such useless courage as he now wasted for the necessitous hour in Caiaphas' palace, where for lack of it he fell into the denial. All this impetuous offer of dangerous experiment here evidenced only rashness and merited only rebuke. It is as much a true Christian's duty to spare himself from all uncalled-for danger as it is his duty to surrender himself to commanded risk in the hour when God summons him. There is a difference between faith and forwardness. Matthew Henry, with his accustomed bright simplicity of expression, says: "There is an over-doing as well as an under-doing, and sometimes such an over-doing as amounts to an un-doing."

But the story moves on, and we may learn, in the second place, that experience is the cure of a presumptuous faith.

The mood of mind Simon Peter was in needed a corrective and a censure. Jesus chose a most unique way of administering them both. He let the man have his own wish. "And he said, Come."

It needs a careful discrimination just here to show precisely what our Lord pledged in this acquiescence,

and what he did not. The reply he rendered was not by any means parallel nor commensurate with the proposal of Simon. For Simon had asked, "Bid me." But Jesus did not bid him. That word "Come" signifies permission, not command. Peter said: "Bid me come unto thee." Christ told him nothing about his being able to keep his foothold so far as to reach his side. Further, Peter said: "Bid me come unto thee on the water." Jesus intimated no promise that the water should continually hold this presumptuous man up from sinking. Simple acquiescence in the new experiment was all Simon Peter got that day; on his own responsibility he took the rest. No fresh faith was granted him. He was merely suffered to have his own way. Our Lord was quite aware that conceited men cannot be taught theoretically. It is necessary that they should have experience for their discipline.

Choose a man spiritually inflated and proudly self-confident, sharply criticising the faults or falls of others. Tell him to be charitable; for their exposures of temptation are heavier than any human nature can bear. Go so far as to hint to him that he could do no better himself. And it is to be feared that he will teach you, by the quiet smile of derision alert upon his face, how little he regards a warning so personal. Tell him, if you will, in dismay at such inveterate presumption, that a thousand Christians have tried in vain to stand before a given stress—an appetite, an amusement, an impulse, or a vice—and you only secure from him the impetuous proposal: "Very

well; but let me try it." Really the best thing to do with him is just to let him try it, when it can be attempted without a perilous injury to other interests. For full experience is the quickest corrective and the surest cure for any venturesome faith that has grown too presuming and too self-reliant.

Easily, then, we learn another lesson from the story. Success is the fine reward of an experienced faith.

At this moment we may well consent to drop, or at least delay, our censure of Simon Peter. For, at the worst, he proves that the root of the matter is in his heart. Grander thing no man ever did in this old world's history than he did when unhesitatingly he followed his bold word with his brave deed: "And when Peter was come down out of the ship he walked on the water to go to Jesus." He had enough of reliance on his Master to obtain and fashion a foothold for a part of the traverse. He did walk upon the water. And as long as his faith held out he accomplished what no human foresight would have pronounced a possible thing for a mortal to do.

Our Lord once said: "He that believeth in me, the works that I do shall he do also." Walking on the water was what Jesus was doing then; and Simon Peter, for one swift, exalted moment, was doing exactly that also. Our inference is instantaneous and irresistible; faith is force; an unbroken faith is omnipotent. For faith is what "laughs at impossibility, and says, It shall be done."

Simon did not go, but he went down to go; and

he did go an admirable part of the way to Jesus. It was his trust in Jesus for even that exploit which upheld him. The motto of each true believer might well be that of the apostle: "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." Success rewards real reliance.

But what was all this for? It is not needful to wonder that such a magnificent miracle was wrought for a mere trivial end. It is not wise to call this end trivial. For our Saviour was writing gospel history for all time to come. Many are the weary workers of this world to whom the success of Peter, even so far as it reached, has brought courage and confirmation. Many a timid faith has read this tale. And then brave souls without number have gone forth to dare greater perils still, because the Master has said, "Come."

Think of it; one of the noblest pictures of earth's history is that of this Galilean fisherman, walking even no more than five or fifteen steps on the water. Curious beyond measure it seems to imagine his feelings. Once out upon the waves, away from the boat, the vision must have been wild and terrific. It was near midnight. The storm of wind had left the sea in ridges. Clouds were overhead and blasts roared beneath, tempests whirling the spray into his face; perhaps white gleams of the passover moonlight rushing through the rifts of running mist; the deep moans of the worried lake, now partly subdued to such unwilling service as lifting the touch of human feet. Still, forward he went "to go" to the Redeem-

er's side; nothing could ever daunt, nothing could ever sink the faith which thus continued steadily "looking off unto Jesus."

Once more: we may learn from this scripture that failure is the discipline of even a successful faith.

It is no trifling thing to war against nature. There is, however, lodged among the ruins of this constitution of ours, now and then a mute reminder of the human race's royalty upon this planet where it dwells. *Will* can fight the law of debasement a little moment, once in a while, and bright intelligence rises into singular and inexplicable regnancy over even the heaviest of matter. A man is lighter by weight in the daytime than in the night. With ordinary wit in exercise, he moves on actually the kingly creature amid the realms of natural life. One can travel farther without weariness of fatigue if only in joyous company. High exhilaration will brace up worn-out sinews. Much resoluteness, a fine sense of elation, the spring and rebound of great bravery, a good measure of personal upleaping of force, the excitement of being in a miracle, combined with some genuine faith in Christ, kept Simon Peter afloat on his feet at any rate for one splendid moment in the sea!

Then faith yielded, and all the rest went for nothing. Alas, for the sense of impotency this frightened man must have had, when he earliest felt himself wavering down into and among the waves! The appalling turbulence of the tempest, the tossing of the billows, the incessant whisk of water from the broken

torrents around him, seem to have unfixed the poise of his trust, and distracted the look of his confidence at once. It was instantaneous, like the abrupt sundering of a wire-connection that takes the attracting power out of a magnet; the needle of his faith became a piece of inert iron.

Perhaps, when he had got on so far, his fear abated, and so he had time to think how fine a thing he had done. That would foster vanity enough to cut him off. Possibly some flash of imagination turned him back on himself, and it may have occurred to him just then to picture how he looked from the boat, or to wonder if those others were still watching him, or to conjecture whether they were not envying his prowess in such a new achievement as this. At all events, the record reads: "But when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid and beginning to sink." After a single grand instant of success, granted as a reward for his measure of steady faith, this man found himself left to endure humiliating failure, as the retribution for his subsequent measure of unbelief.

It is never any new burst of a tempest, nor any fresh revelations of dark clouds, which causes so many of us venturesome people to sink our successes in ignominious defeat. It is simply an unwarrantable and unnecessary breaking up of our trust in the Lord. While Simon Peter unwaveringly depended on Jesus, he went straight along toward him. The moment he let his thought turn he was gone. While he said, "I will walk by Christ," there was no denying it, he

did walk. But when he began to whisper to himself, "I am walking on the water; what do the world think of me?" there was no denying it, he went under. We cannot possibly be mistaken in such a conclusion. For, when our Lord seizes him by the hand to save him, there is full explanation in the rebuke he administers; Jesus says to him, "O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?"

Hence, finally, we may learn also from this story that quick prayer for help is the relief for a failing faith.

"He cried, Lord, save me!" The one admirable feature in Simon's behavior that eventful day was found in his seeking for succor at the right source. He still turned to Jesus for help. When he felt himself going under the water, we should say that, like any other fisherman, he would instantly have taken to swimming, or called for relief from the comrades in the boat. But it is likely we are all ready to admit we do not know what would have become of him if he had turned his back on Christ at such a juncture, or attempted to shirk for himself in the midst of the peril.

There is often as much wit and wisdom employed in the retrieval of any vast misfortune as is needed for ordinary success in adventure. A wild life Peter had been leading on that lake; he was an experienced swimmer, for we read in another chapter that he plunged swiftly into the sea once, and went faster to shore than the boat did. It is wonderfully welcome to find him gathering up his energies here, not

of skill but of faith, for his extrication. He will be rescued by Jesus, or not at all. And before we pronounce harshly upon his undoubted failure, it does seem just fair to remember how nobly he accepted his discipline, and educated his faith back to a new hold.

Of course, the immediate application of all this is to every man's own wild fluctuations of feeling in periods of perplexity or doubt. Perhaps our minds are benumbed with a chill of subtle arguments, or our hearts grow tremulous under trial. We push on, but we observe our souls are sinking in humiliating failure. And then we fall to thinking of the failure, and the disastrous results coming after failure. Hence, things grow rapidly worse; for the more a failing faith thinks of its failing—indeed, the more it thinks of anything except Jesus Christ the Lord, and how it shall get closer and stay nearer to him—the more certain it is that the timid soul will be lost at the last. For nothing can be truer than this:

“If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given to him. But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering: for he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. For let not that man think he shall receive anything of the Lord.”

Faith, to be trustworthy and available, must never lose heart. That omnipotence, which can confirm one step of ours upon a watery floor, can certainly compact the waves like rock beneath our tread

through the whole traverse of duty, if only trust is held steady.

Simon Peter failed in order to show the essential and necessary weakness of one who has lost his union with his Saviour, and the certain sinking of one who has looked at the troubles which beset him, when he should have kept looking only unto Christ.

Simon Peter failed that he might teach us all along the ages how very quick is the reversal of failure into success again, when our wandering eyes return from their wavering to their allegiance, from their outlook of apprehension to their serenity of trust. Is it possible that any man on earth could have a better tale told of him than this: "Beginning to sink, he cried, Lord, save me!"

How pleasantly the record closes as the incident reaches its end: "Immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand and caught him." And probably he did not let go of him again after that. We can easily be persuaded that this disciple was quite satisfied with such a termination of his adventure. For the Lord offered him the privilege of walking on the sea the second time, and now he walked perfectly safely. That seems to be the only way he could get back to the boat—he trod the billows upright at last, alongside of Jesus; and the most wonderful picture in the world would be that which would fittingly portray the scene, the Master and the man, hand-in-hand, stepping on together over the living crests of a willing Gennesaret, which in the hour of subjection knew its Lord!

CHAPTER XX.

THE GREAT CONFESSION.

The next day after the walk on the water, Simon Peter, in company with the rest, and attended by a large throng of the impetuous residents of Capernaum, listened to the discourse which was destined to divide the people more than anything Christ had ever preached before. Even some of those who had seemed ready to become his firm adherents forsook him from that time. For the doctrine he disclosed was not only unusually mysterious in its form of expression, but it was also repugnant in its suggestion to every unrenewed heart. He had risen in his teachings step by step, until he now told every man that his case was inevitably hopeless unless he was willing to accept an atonement wrought out for him by another. He must renounce himself, and be content to be saved by a transfer of personality so thorough that it amounted to losing his identity in a Saviour provided. Precisely what he said was this: "I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world. Verily, verily, I say unto you, except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day." Of course, ordinary people were stumbled, and refused to follow a leader whom they considered

mystic and absurd ; and so there came coolness and an evident wane of his popularity, which began to affect his nearest adherents. The tone of the narrative seems to sadden a little. "Then said Jesus unto the twelve, Will ye also go away?" It was at this time that the early reply was made which has in all the ages shown that in the disciple, understood to be the most impulsive, there was a residue of great and generous force : "Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God."

We attach much importance to this first confession of Jesus as the divine Redeemer ; but the necessities of this series of biographical incidents require that we rapidly place beside it another very much resembling it, and yet in some points altogether transcending it. And we may as well say now that it is possible that the difference between these two creeds of confession turns upon the fact that, by this time, Peter had got so far on in the divine life that the Holy Ghost was making personal revelations to his soul, was settling his convictions, was offering positively new information, and was realizing to him what he already intelligently knew. And moreover, the one bold, strong confession opened the way to another bolder and stronger still. In the last instance, we shall meet a commendation so extraordinary that it sounds like one of the Beatitudes from the Sermon on the Mount. It may have been the promptness, the heartiness, the deepened reach of Peter's

belief, which Jesus now approved. For on the second occasion Peter spoke as taught by God himself; Christ plainly told him that.

Nothing is more certain than that there is one period in the life of each true believer when the Spirit of God begins to let in an unusual flood of new knowledge upon his present experiences; knowledge of truth which in its relations and majesty it is his personal and official prerogative to bestow. This is the teaching of the inspired apostle spoken long afterwards: "For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."

The story of the second confession takes us quite away from our familiar neighborhoods, and summons us outside of Galilee. Clear up on the northern boundary of that province once stood a little town, to which the ancients gave the name of Banias, insignificant in everything except in the beauty of its situation. It lay very close to some copious springs, out of the waters of which, flowing cool and crystal down the slopes of Lebanon, the river Jordan takes its rise. Philip, the tetrarch, adorned and enlarged the town at great cost; and he called it Cæsarea-Philippi, in honor of Tiberius, then the Cæsar at Rome, adding, however, his own cognomen in order to distinguish it from another Cæsarea, lying down by the Great Sea, a city of much celebrity in the earlier history, and for a conspicuous period of years the metropolis of Palestine.

To this spot once came our divine Lord with his disciples. Possibly, he was withdrawing himself for rest, seeking retirement from the trying throngs that pressed him. At this place there occurred an unusually important conversation, so far as ecclesiastical history is concerned; for it has been the polemic battle-ground of the ages. Here was spoken that second wonderful confession of Simon Peter which has rendered the locality famous. Grand as that old cliff is, it will crumble into its native dust and be forgotten long before the speech of one mere Galilean fisherman, made at its base, will have ceased to be discussed. To Simon Peter was granted the answer to Job's ancient prayer: "Oh, that my words were now written! oh, that they were printed in a book! that they were graven with an iron pen and lead in the rock for ever!"

Further: it so happens that in the course of the narrative are found certain forms of expression used by our Saviour, which receive their explanation from certain unusual conformations of landscape and local surroundings that appear to have given fashion to the extraordinarily forcible figure he used.

The ancient Greeks had a deity called Pan. They associated with his worship retired caverns or grottos, as most appropriate for his chosen place of abode, and as furnishing their own fittest resort for assembling. One of these sylvan shrines is known to have lain at the base of Mount Hermon. There, even at the present day, is disclosed a vast and magnificent cave, hollowed in a hill-side of stone. Oak groves are all

around it, of splendidly developed growth and age. There used to be an elegant city almost within reach; this they called "Panium," after the name of Pan.

Suggestive ruins are lying there now, shapeless and overgrown with bricrs. But the most noticeable thing in the vicinity is one mighty cliff of bare rock, stretching up above the cave a thousand feet of sheer precipice—a perpendicular of red limestone, like the wall of a Titan's castle. Inscriptions cut on the surface claim to perpetuate a hundred by-gone traditions. Legends without limit of number or exaggeration surround the spot. Eusebius grows briskly eloquent, and Josephus becomes insufferably tedious, with laborious effort to rehearse them.

As the dynasties rose and fell, one town after another sprang up on the plain beneath; first, Panium, then Banias, and then Cæsarea-Philippi, where we meet our Lord with his disciples on the occasion of Simon Peter's great confession of faith.

Beautiful, perhaps the most beautiful in all northern Palestine, is this famous neighborhood. Underneath the cavern is gathered a volume of water that finally, after cooling itself in the dark abodes of its birth, rushes out in a delightfully clear stream, fully a hundred feet broad, dashing down the rugged rocks in rapid and musical currents, drenching the hot air with freshness, and ravishing a traveler's eye with sensuous play of foam and leaping of cascades. The whole region is fragrantly strewn with flowers, lying among an exquisite mingling of sunshines and shadows cast by the ilexes and olives. It is often

called "the Tivoli of Syrian landscape," one of those attractive scenes which an artist hastens to visit, when he would renew his portfolio with the loveliest sketches of unfamiliar beauty from the Orient.

"When Jesus came into the coasts of Cæsarea-Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying, Whom do men say that I, the Son of man, am? And they said, Some say that thou art John the Baptist; some Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets."

Luke informs us that when this famous conversation took place Jesus had just been alone praying; and Mark adds that it occurred "by the way." In all likelihood, this was one of those interesting roadside discourses with which Christ was accustomed to enrich his companionship, as he moved on with that familiar group of intimates which followed him. For order in our present study, the particulars of description are easily arranged around two points; namely, the creed this disciple professed, and the credit he got by it.

It is evident, from the history, that our Lord desired to awaken some sort of anxiety in the minds of his followers, and to excite their feelings of loyalty to truth, and to himself, so that they might be upon their guard against disaffection under any popular pressure, or any wild popular perversions of his character or mission.

So, coming forth quietly from his usual devotions in the mountain, and joining his company, he abruptly put to them the question, "Whom do men say that I, the Son of man, am?" They made no hesi-

tation in their reply. Frankly they proceeded to rehearse the views which they had heard expressed in one way and another throughout their journeys. A portion of the reports among the crowds they could easily remember.

They informed him that an uneasy few, with Herod at the head of them, said he was a resuscitation of John the Baptist. Even at that early day, it is possible that some held the doctrine of transmigration of souls. The notion was prevalent, borrowed from heathen philosophy, that those who as martyrs suffered for religious beliefs would be allowed to come to the upper world again; at any rate, they would arise from the dead before the rest. Hence, the disciples also told Jesus that there were others who believed him to be one who was inhabited by the soul of Elijah. This Old Testament prophet had not died, but was translated into heaven; and Malachi, the latest seer who had declared a message from God, had left on record an obscure intimation that he would actually return some time. Then, further, one of this company, possibly Matthew, for he alone records the rumor, mentioned that some thought Jesus was Jeremiah.

Apparently the talk now became desultory, for the suggestion fell away into a mere grouping together of all the weaker stories or more foolish traditions they had caught as to our Lord's being "one of the prophets." One thing is observable in these reports; however the opinions differed, and however extravagantly wide of the real truth they all were,

they were honorable testimonials to the dignity of Jesus. For these gossipers in the streets had hastened to give him the best names they had, and they unhesitatingly reckoned him among the epoch-leaders of the age. This would prove that the common people, who originally heard him gladly, had not yet altogether forsaken his cause, nor turned away from his teaching. Still, as we note that in all these conjectures there was not found one clear acknowledgment of the messiahship of Jesus, we are forced to confess that the obstinate denials of the rulers and the violent denunciations of the interested placemen, as well as the sophistical arguments of the multiplied sects, had fatally demoralized the entire nation, and blinded their eyes to the awful risks they were running in their rejection of the Lord of glory.

Now we are not to suppose that Jesus was ignorant as to this. He must have known what were the opinions abroad, and how much confidence in them his followers were wont to place. But he seems to wish a full expression of their thoughts in the midst of such confusion. His aim appears to have been to lead them to declare what, in their own judgment, had been the impression thus far of these two years' ministry. What did they conclude people at large had already come to think of his person and his office as God's messenger to men?

Jesus seems to have manifested no surprise, and exhibited no mortification, when he received so discouraging an account of what his disciples had heard. He had, however, a deeper concern than

this. It mattered little, comparatively, what the untaught populace in Palestine thought of him; it mattered more what those who followed him believed. So he turned his question directly upon the disciples: "But whom say ye that I am?" Among that band of adherents there was only one man of whom an immediate answer was to be expected: "And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God."

This, then, was the great confession of faith, which has come down to us through the ages. It was the creed that Peter boldly proffered; we are now ready to consider the credit he got for it. It need not be any surprise to us that he received from our Lord himself instantly an honorable approval of his intelligence and courage. More welcome word than that, which it was his high privilege to hear from the Master then, was never spoken from heaven to earth: "And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven."

We have already learned that *Bar* means son; hence, "Simon Bar-jona" signifies *son of Jonas*, a name pronounced here as an exact antithesis and answer to the new name which this disciple applied just now to Jesus, "Son of God." When our Lord told Peter that "flesh and blood" had not revealed such a measure of truth to him, it becomes quite clear that he intended to say that intelligence like this did not come from any mere insight of human penetration, nor from any degree of sagacity or worldly wis-

dom ; it must have been given directly by inspiration from God himself. It is evident, therefore, that there are great and valuable lessons for us to learn from this whole conversation.

First, it will follow from a story like this, that *it is of vast consequence what a man believes*, and all the more if he be sincere in his creed. For it is likely one may seek in vain through the entire New Testament, and he will not discover anywhere another man than Simon Peter ever called "blessed" by our Lord Jesus Christ. This Galilean disciple received a wonderful honor merely because he accepted as revealed from on high the whole story of the cross, the work and the nature, the heavenly divinity and the earthly mastership, of the Messiah.

We learn also that *it is not enough to admit the bare record*, and so simply consent to an historic Christ. It is not enough to whisper, "Jesus of Nazareth must have been a divine person," and then drop hushed into a great, deep, devout, mystical wonder about him. Nor is it enough to cherish a sweet poetic sentiment as to the beauty of his character and the pure loveliness of his weary life. For if this Galilean rabbi was anything, he was our God—Jehovah manifest in the flesh. If he came to this world for any purpose whatever, it was to make an atonement for sin. And unless he is received in the exercise of his offices as prophet, priest, and king, he is not received in any such way as brings the word, "Blessed art thou!"

Again, to a human soul struggling for its immortal

life, *Jesus the Saviour is everything at once, or he is nothing forever.* In that old day of Simon Peter, it was hard to get at the exact truth. But what was perhaps a special and miraculous disclosure to him is at this later date a commonplace and everyday experience to us. Each increment of our growing knowledge in a sense comes new, as it did to him, by revelation of the Spirit of divine grace: "But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal."

Furthermore: can we not see from a story like this *how far the opinions of others are to be considered*, when we are making up our own minds? What if men do differ? What if the community is full of wandering surmises? Truth is independent of mere popular applause or conjecture. There are some things about which conscientious and responsible human beings are not permitted to yield to mere epidemic prejudice. And, certainly, what flesh and blood cannot reveal, flesh and blood are not competent in any possible form to pass upon for others. "What if some did not believe?" They must be left to disbelieve, then, and take their own chances. "Shall that make the promises of God of none effect?" At least three things there are in the New Testament, it would appear, which are not in the area of charitable tolerance. We do not see where a man is to go who cannot agree with Simon Peter here in this notable assertion of his creed: Jehovah is supreme, and Christ is absolutely God, and Jesus is the Christ. This

is what the brave man from Bethsaida said there at Cæsarea, and his Lord pronounced him "blessed." What would the Almighty himself say about one who differed with him then ?

Finally, we cannot fail to see that *the one question above all other questions of the present day is this* : "Whom say ye that I am ?" Here Christ is, in the world, a factor in history, an influence among men. Some disposal is to be made of the words he has spoken and the force he exerts. "What think ye of Christ ?" It is an individual question ; each of us must deal with it. But he only will be "blessed" of the Lord who answers it as this disciple answered it, when, out of his exultant and obedient heart, he exclaimed : "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God !"

CHAPTER XXI.

THE GIFT OF THE KEYS.

After the extraordinary encomium of benediction had been pronounced upon Simon Bar-jona for his confession of Jesus' divinity and messiahship, there followed a commission to his life-work, given him on the spot. So remarkable were the words which our Lord employed that it is best to quote the record in full :

“And I say also unto thee, that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.”

The name *Pcter* means a rock. There is in this sentence a play on words, needing in order to be seen plainly a language resembling the Aramaic, which Jesus sometimes used. The French catches it in the rendering of the verse *Pierre—pierre* : “Thou art a rock, and on this rock.” It does not seem worth while to delay ourselves with that pretty theory concerning the difference in grammatical gender between the name of the disciple and that of the object chosen for the rhetorical comparison in the latter part of the sentence, whatever it was. It is true of the terms that in the Greek one is masculine and the other is feminine; but Jesus may have been talking Aramaic; and there is in that language no distinction. It has only

a single word for stone, and that is the word *cephas*, which might have been used in this instance, and so have become long afterward the name by which Peter is sometimes called in the Epistles.

Here occurs, for the first time in the New Testament, the word *church*. Literally, it signifies, "the called ones," the elect of God, the entire body of believers on the earth. When Jesus says "the gates of hell shall not prevail against it," he uses a *gate* as a symbol of power. That is an old and familiar form of speech in oriental countries, where the capital cities were generally surrounded with walls. Even now we are accustomed to speak of the *Sublime Porte* as the gate, or the center of authority, in the Ottoman Empire. The Saviour intends to proclaim that the church is eternally safe; all machinations of infernal malignity put forth by the powers of darkness will prove futile; nothing can ever be permitted to harm those whom the Almighty chooses and groups into an organization for his work.

So far the interpretation of this passage is quite easy. But we now reach those remarkable words concerning the power of the keys, which have in the ages gone by made this part of the inspired record the Waterloo of ecclesiastical history.

The mighty question which now agitates and divides Christendom is just this: What is intended by the "rock"? And who was it, if anybody, to whom supremacy was given by the declaration of our Lord? To all this there is to be given an answer, which is likely to be received as final, ac-

cording to our previous education and training in the truth.

The adherents of the Church of Rome reply that Simon Peter personally was made by these words primate in all ecclesiastical organization and power on the earth, and that for all future time. They say he was the first in an unbroken series of popes, the continuous line and official succession of which has remained perfect even to the present generation. To him, they insist, were given the keys of all exclusion, and the plenitude of all power, till the end of the world. And they claim now that he had, and after him his successors have had and do have, the rule of the race, men and kingdoms alike, as if a true and permanent vice-regency of Almighty God had been established in him and in those who came after him. Since the decision of a late so-called council, the popes are held to be infallible, and always supreme, by reason of the transmitted commission and supremacy of Simon Peter, delivered to the old fisherman of Bethsaida there by the side of the cliff in Cæsarea-Philippi.

Lest these statements should be doubted, it is well enough to quote a single deliverance of the papal hierarchy which is a part of the common history of the world. It is the Bull of Pius V., and is entitled "The Damnation and Excommunication of Elizabeth, Queen of England, and Her Adherents, with an Addition of Other Punishments." In the body of it occur these two sentences, which are all we need for our present purpose:

"He that reigneth on high, to whom is given all

power in heaven and in earth, committed one Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church (out of which there is no salvation) to one alone upon earth, namely, to Peter, the Prince of the Apostles, and to Peter's successor, the Bishop of Rome, to be governed in fulness of power. Him alone he made Prince over all people and all kingdoms, to pluck up, destroy, scatter, consume, plant, and build."

Such an interpretation of this part of Matthew's gospel, it hardly needs to be said, is rejected by Protestants the world over, in every measure and degree. We cut the chain of links off close up to the staple from which it hangs; we say there is not the least ground for an assertion that anything of this sort whatsoever was bestowed upon this Simon, son of Jonas, then or ever afterwards; and that no allusion whatsoever was made to any possible successors, or to any claims they might set up. This disciple was not made supreme pontiff in any conceivable sense. Whatever power was symbolized by the offer of what are here denominated "the keys," was, in another conversation, given, in exactly the same terms, to all the rest of the twelve; and nothing was said about any successors to them either. And as to personal steadfastness, not even Peter's best friend would do his memory any favor by calling attention to the un-rock-like career he left behind him in the Scripture history. A church that, in such a period as that was, had no foundation more stable than Simon Peter to stand upon would have gone into ruins under his pitiful denial of his Lord before he was

dead. If any one desires to fashion a picture of this "first pope," the predecessor of that Pius who wrote such impudent and blasphemous words concerning the Queen of England, let him take the moment when, just outside the gate of the high priest's palace, he stands weeping over his awful defection, and the crowing of a cock disturbs his soul a hundred-fold depths deeper than the Bull did that of Elizabeth Plantagenet, the daughter of Henry VIII.

Singularly enough, in the gospel of the evangelist Mark, that one in particular which Peter is always credited with having supervised, no mention whatsoever is made of this commission in its terms or in its implications. The journey to Cæsarea-Philippi is detailed, and some of the incidents dwelt upon; but this entire feature of the story is left out. Think of any other pope in the succeeding centuries leaving that declaration out of his bulls! Simon Peter seemed to admit that the offer of the keys did not need to be put on record. And if it was the modesty of this man which prompted the omission, all we have to say is, that was a characteristic, at any rate, which did not descend to later ages, or light on any one of those who claimed the succession.

But now, on the other hand, setting up no claims whatsoever in their own behalf, and so having no theory of supremacy to defend, the Protestant churches over the world present these two forms of interpretation of our Lord's words, either of which seems a fairer rendering of their meaning, and both of which instantly rebut all argument or conjecture

that a papal supremacy was intended by our Lord to be established in Peter's person.

Some people like to think that the confession which Simon uttered—that is, the truth in it, the doctrine in it—was the thing intended when Jesus spoke of a “rock.” The language is all rhetorical. Remember the external circumstances at the time in which, and at the spot near which, the words were spoken. The picture in the sentence is that of an edifice conspicuously set upon a rock. Well, there was right there before the eyes of all of them a vast rock, and on it a newly erected temple of beautiful white marble, a heathen place of worship, but a fine building nevertheless, and certainly calculated to suggest the figure. It was the habit of our Lord to catch such apt similitudes. But what is the natural thought under the symbol? Many expositors would make their notion clear by a slight paraphrase. “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God,” said Peter. In substance the Saviour appears to have replied: “That is true; the Holy Ghost has communicated to you a new and wonderful doctrine; we might have known you were to be depended upon; you are the embodiment of your own confession; it is *Peter* through and through, grand and characteristic; you are a rock, and your creed is a rock, too; this fine answer is weighty truth; a great organization can well be set upon it, as that edifice up yonder is set on the cliff over the fountain; your doctrine shall be made the basis of the New Testament church!”

Now, that is certainly dignified and scholarly as an exposition of the words of the Lord Jesus. Many there are who accept it as quite satisfactory. But there are others who prefer to think that he meant only the external organization of the church any way, and referred simply to some forms of construction over which this man was to have personal supervision. They are solicitous lest their antagonists should say that it gives an unnatural strain to language to apply the word "rock" to a man, because his name signified rock, and then turn in the next instant to apply it the rather to a mere statement of his belief which he had just made. And they feel that the symmetry and intelligent connection of thought might as well be preserved between the clauses. They are willing, therefore, to admit that there might be a sense in which Simon Peter personally was designated as the rock on which the new organization should be erected. And so they call attention to the structure of the entire address, and proceed to restrict carefully the notion contained and expressed in the word "build." This address of our Lord to Peter cannot possibly refer to a spiritual headship in dealing with the souls of men; it must mean some sort of prominence only in the practical task of organizing the visible congregations under the preaching of the gospel; and that was most assuredly given to this particular one of the apostolic band.

"Kingdom" here signifies, therefore, the church on earth. There is no assumption so violent as that

upon which the whole value of the discussion, so far as the papal communion is concerned, must be considered to turn. Two things at once are arrogated as given into the hands of the Catholic priesthood. It is claimed that church privileges are in their exclusive patronage and prerogative. Nobody outside of the Romish communion can be saved, and the priests only have the right to decide who shall come in or stay in. Then at the same moment this very language is adroitly diverted so that it shall not be the membership in the visible church which passes into discussion, but, in any given case, it is the eternal ruin or welfare of the man's soul in hell or heaven that is put at stake. For did not the Lord tell Simon Peter that whatsoever he should bind on earth should be bound in heaven, and whatsoever he should loose on earth should be loosed in heaven? The Roman Catholic Church would not hold position a month if it were not believed by the deluded multitudes that the priests had power to control the souls of living men and decide the destiny they enter beyond the grave.

It is pitiable to be obliged to descend into parsing for the sake of argument; but there is no way of showing the perversion of truth here, except to call attention to the grammatical phraseology. The term rendered "whatsoever" is in the neuter gender, both in Greek and English. This is explicit and unmistakable. It is not *whomsoever*, but *whatsoever*. It must certainly, therefore, refer to things and not to persons. It cannot mean souls; it must

mean rites and forms, ceremonies and orders of arrangement, and principles of organization. In this declaration of Scripture there is no allusion to heaven as a fixed place or abode of happiness above. It is awful and abhorrent to think of such a passage as this giving the control to men over so vast a matter as the future disposal of other men's souls. The "keys of the kingdom of heaven" is an expression which must be understood as belonging to the visible church, and having not even an implied bearing upon the infinite and august decisions of the future state. To *bind* means to fix, to settle; and to *loose* means to reject, to abrogate. Jesus is talking about the mere institutions of the church as a body, and is putting Peter forward to set up such as would best complete the organization.

In paraphrase, this address of Jesus to Simon would seem to read thus: "I will give to thee the responsibility of modeling and establishing a form of government and management of the church which I wish you to construct on the earth. Whatsoever thou shalt ordain as best and most convenient for its effective action and perpetuity I will accept. Whatsoever thou shalt esteem needful and indispensable, judging from prudent intercourse with men, shall also be given authority by the sanction of God in heaven. And whatsoever appears too strict or rigid, either in the old ceremonies or the former precepts or rituals, shall be rejected also on high. It shall be left to thee, Simon Peter, in connection with the other apostles, to decide what should be the cus-

toms and forms and principles of the visible church, and what shall be optional and what shall be obligatory."

And so, we may add in passing, that the other parallel instruction, addressed to the disciples as a whole, in the passage which has generally been associated with this—that which has the expression concerning "remitting sins"—means simply the orderly exercise of church discipline to be administered.

That this explanation of the commission to Peter is the true one, is corroborated by several facts in the subsequent history. One most significant matter of observation is that in the real issues involved Simon Peter never did have any such primacy as might be called a supremacy over the rest of the apostles. One of the very latest acts of his life was such that Paul, in sharp words, withstood him to the face because "he was to be blamed." Peter never seems to have been consulted more than the rest. Indeed, when what some have insisted upon calling the First Council in Jerusalem was held, it was James, and not Simon Peter, who presided and ultimately issued the decrees of that body. And the case is far stronger when we look at the question of spiritual supremacy. For here we have the apostle's own words for our help. He never claimed anything resembling headship over his brethren. On the contrary, the language of one of his epistles distinctly repudiates it on his own part, and exhorts all the rest of the ecclesiastics of his day to continue humble, and be on their guard against ambition and

pride: "The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed. Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock. And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away."

Think of words like these put into a Bull addressed to an assemblage of the clergy by a modern pope! Peter's successors would be likely to find small comfort in Peter's two epistles.

But now as to mere organization of the visible church, as historically detailed to us in the Book of the Acts, the case is very different. Simon Peter did have just such a leadership as this special office would imply in establishing the congregations and gathering the people into one. He had "the keys" in such a sense as that he first opened the doors of divine communication to both the Jews and the Gentiles. The figure seems to mean just the ordinary opening of the counsels of God to men in the preaching of the truth. It is given as a fact that, when the Jews in those days made a man a Doctor of the Law, they put into his hands the key of the room in the Temple where the sacred books were kept; signifying by such a symbolic act that authority was now conferred upon him to teach and to expound the "mysteries of the kingdom of heaven." Certainly

Peter received the "keys" in this sense; for it is a marvelous fact that he as the very pioneer in the work first preached the whole gospel of the resurrection to the Israelites on the Day of Pentecost, and then formed the converts into an organic body. Even after that we find him in the advance. He preached to the first Jew and the first Gentile the message to men as announced in Jesus Christ.

Two things there have been which it would seem as if ambitious men had always been trying to get, but which have been deliberately and by name set apart to Christ himself; these two are the Foundation and the Keys. Simon Peter ascribes the first of these joyfully and enthusiastically to Him; he even quotes Scripture to give weight to his counsel showing where it belongs: "Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. Wherefore also it is contained in the scripture, Behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner-stone, elect, precious; and he that believeth on Him shall not be confounded."

The other of these great objects of human ambition, the keys, our divine Lord spoke out of the heavens above to claim for his own. While the evangelist John was lying at his feet as dead, the Son of Man laid his hand upon him and said: "Fear not; I am the first and the last. I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death." After this the same exalted Being gave him a message to de-

liver to one of the churches, and in order to have it authoritative and final he adds this endorsement at the beginning: "These things saith he that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the key of David, he that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth."

Christ Jesus the Lord, therefore, and not Simon Peter at all, is the true Rock-Foundation of the Church, on which, if it stands, it stands safely and forever. It would be pitiably insecure, if it sought to plant itself upon an old disciple, with a series of popes coming along in train after him. "Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Christ." Why should anyone desire to take away, if he could, the two chief prerogatives of the Son of Man who was the Son of God? "Our Rock is not as their rock, our enemies themselves being judges."

Yet there is no good in belittling the real excellence, or the true official rank of this disciple. Without doubt Simon Peter was put forward for a specific and honorable end. To deny or evade this is to become quite too protestant for truth. It has been said again and again that this brave-hearted and successful preacher added as many Christians to the church of the risen Redeemer, in its first year, as, for many centuries after, were added by all the rest of the apostolic band together.

CHAPTER XXII.

“BEHIND ME, SATAN.”

While Jesus, with his company of disciples gathered around him, was still lingering in the region of Cæsarea, he seemed to think that the time had arrived in which he ought to instruct them more definitely concerning the atonement as a doctrine of chief importance to all who wished to be saved. And on this occasion two peculiarities of Simon Peter came prominently into view, his faith and his forwardness. The one was commended, the other was signally rebuked. We spend a few moments in this chapter in showing how the grand confession of his Master was followed by the most miserable mistake the disciple ever made.

Hitherto Jesus had taught his followers concerning some of the mysteries of his Messiahship. To all his instruction on that head they gave their joyful assent, admitting at once his claims to be the long-promised King of the Jews. The profane world was divided in estimates; they were united in one positive acknowledgment now, which this comrade Peter had just voiced in their behalf, “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.”

Still there remained the most difficult and dangerous task for him to perform. He must damp their glowing ardor; he must wound their feelings of personal regard; he must check all their anticipations of the coming back of the old grandeurs to the realm of David.

They must be made to see that priesthood ranks before royalty always in the gospel economy. Christ was to suffer before he could reign. This they ought to know.

"From that time forth began Jesus to show unto his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed and be raised again the third day." This task was difficult, because of human dullness. The disciples had lost the true idea of a spiritual kingdom. All the images of splendor in prophecy were to them sensuous merely. The King was only an oriental monarch; the kingdom was no more than a wide empire of extensive sway. And clear down to the last moment, their inveterate question was the unceasing refrain, "Wilt thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?"

Moreover, this task was dangerous, because such teaching necessarily ran counter to the strongest prejudices of their education and previous belief. They revered Jerusalem; he told them that there should be just the spot of peril to him. They had the highest regard for their traditional leaders; he detailed with calm significance the treatment which the elders, chief priests, and scribes were to give him. And there was unmeasurable risk in such revelations as these now. A rejection by the Sanhedrin would carry force to many a mind. And delicate indeed was the duty Jesus had to perform, when he attempted to teach those disciples that through death he was to live; by the cross only should he come to the crown.

We are not surprised, therefore, to meet an interruption at this point. No one would be half so likely to speak out unbidden as Simon Peter. The narrative advances a step to note his interference. With a quick revulsion of feeling this man must have passed from the mood of deep reverence in which he had made his noble confession of faith, into a mood of surprising presumption, for we find him proffering advice to his Lord. "Then Peter took him, and began to rebuke him, saying, Be it far from thee, Lord; this shall not be unto thee."

Perhaps this means that Peter took Jesus one side a little, turned his face away from the others so as to whisper his expostulation. This expression, "Be it far from thee," is singularly unfortunate. The margin renders it in much greater exactness, "Pity thyself." Simon only meant to cheer up our Lord a little: "Favor yourself; do not put pain into your prospect."

It would not be easy to conceive an act more thoroughly exhibitory and illustrative of this disciple's character than that which is here recorded. It derives more significance from the fact that the narrative of it is fullest and most detailed in that gospel which Peter himself indited to Mark. That evangelist does not so much as mention the grand encomium which "Simon Bar-jona" received, but he spreads out this humiliating mistake of his at full length.

The entire scene is exquisitely true to nature. Peter was probably elated above measure by the

favor just shown him in putting him into the lead of the rest. The first exercise of his “headship” was found in this absurd, foolish presumption. He who had just been entrusted with the organization of Christ’s church began his administration with an expostulation addressed to its supreme Head!

It showed Simon’s ignorance. Could there have been a more miserable misunderstanding of the Messiah’s errand? It exhibited his precipitation also; he must take the Saviour to task there immediately in the presence of the whole company. It made his vanity conspicuous, for his very manner seems to be familiar, as he turns Jesus’ head away a little out of hearing; the patronizing temper of the words is singularly offensive to all our notions of propriety.

But we must admit that it displayed Simon’s noble generosity most of all. He could not bear to have the Saviour put himself in pain. Doubtless, he thought that Jesus was unnecessarily depressed in spirits. He desired to encourage him and prevent his being so down-hearted. His sympathies were aroused. Still, admitting all this, extenuating his behavior as we may, there remains on every mind the impression of Peter’s weakness. He was forward to no purpose, and impertinent only to his own shame.

So, as we return to the record once more, we find a rebuke addressed to his presumption. A startling reprehension fell back upon him, unparalleled and overwhelming. “But he turned and said unto Peter, Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto

me: for thou savorest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men."

The Saviour would not listen to anything of the sort. This language is explosive and violent. Two particles are chosen which indicate intense energy of reprobation. "Go, begone!" As if Christ had said, "Away with you! Out of my sight!" This was the same form of expression he employed when in the solemn hours of his official temptation he had rebuked the devil himself. "Savorest" is a poor word; our Lord meant to say that Simon had only gross, low human views. Our new revision renders it: "thou mindest not the things of God, but the things of men."

This peremptory language illustrates with equal clearness the character of our Lord. His deep abhorrence of everything sinful comes suddenly to notice. It is useless to attempt to represent the gospel as all tenderness and soft forbearance. The Master himself had stern words at command; he could make sharp, stinging utterances when they were needed.

What a rift in the clouds of mere earthly conception this one small sentence opens! What altogether inadequate notions of Christ's divine work must this disciple have had before he could possibly indulge himself to such a proposal! Was Peter willing to forego the making of an atonement for sin?

How quickly we are reminded of the sad remark Jesus once made on another occasion: "I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I strait-

ened till it be accomplished!” Now and then, all along his career, there came to him the recollection of the “hour” which was approaching. It shone luridly in upon even his happiest seasons. He *only* saw the heaven-side of this economy of redemption. The great plan of sacrificial atonement swept out into his view; but he could not make even his disciples understand it. So he bore his burden unshared.

Yet, although he was misconstrued, he would not drop down his standard. We see here that he reasserts the doctrine, for which the now penitent Peter perhaps had more relish, and extends the reach of it even to his followers. He was to suffer, and they were to suffer likewise. And he closes this most instructive conversation with plain suggestions of warning and affectionate counsel. He wished to have no one join lot with him under mistake. No man should be permitted even to “pity himself.” It was not a light thing to become a Christian. There was a cross coming before each crown. “Then said Jesus unto his disciples, if any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it.”

We reach now the lessons to be learned by us all from such an incident in the life of this disciple.

Begin with this: “Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall.” There could be no more vivid illustration, no more strenuous enforcement, of these words of another apostle, than the frightful reversal of language used towards this one.

Peter never appeared better than at the opening of this interview. The sentence of approval: "Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona:" will go down the ages. But now how violent seems the reprobation: "Away with you, devil! Get thee behind me, Satan!"

We shall miss the instruction if we suppose this belonged peculiarly and all alone to Simon, the son of Jonas. That spurning rebuke, that withering name, may come to any one of us in the hour of pride; for there is just this mixture in every man, the *Petra* and the *Satana*. The Rock and the Devil dispute for the sway and possession in all human hearts.

We may learn also that it is the hour of praise which is oftenest the hour of peril. Reproach has this one good thing about it; it does not distract our senses and make us lose head. That was a wise remark made by an English orator: "Every man is stronger for knowing the worst he can know about himself, and for acting upon this knowledge." But compliments bewilder us, and the sense of a great achievement puffs up.

Simon Peter was proud to be told that he knew some things that no other flesh and blood had ever found out. So he proposed to give some new opinions as to the unnecessary difficulties of the atonement. And that was quite beyond him.

It is the full cup which is so very difficult to carry without spilling its contents. "Indeed," says the poetic Jeremy Taylor, "it is hard for a man to be cried up for a saint, to walk upon the spire of glory,

and to have no adherence or impure mixtures of vanity grow on the outside of his heart.”

We may learn here, once more, the temper in which to receive rebuke. The fact has come to our knowledge, more than once in the study of Simon's biography, that in his disposition he was a quick and passionate man. Hard words might reasonably be expected to make him fly into anger. But there is no evidence of any such weakness here. He knew he deserved all his Lord said to him on this occasion. To all appearance, Simon bent his head acquiescingly to the reprimand he had merited.

Indeed, more than this; there is reason to believe that this disciple, humiliated beyond measure as he must have been, not only made no impatient reply, and offered no excited extenuation, but actually heard and heeded the admonition, and tried to grow better under it. For, some years afterwards, when he was writing his Epistle to Christians, he said: “For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? But if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God.”

This man was willing to bear all that the speech of people could bring to him. If he deserved the rebuke—as in this instance he knew he did—then he bore it because he had merited it. If he did not deserve the reproaches they heaped upon him, then he bore them still patiently, because forbearance was a grace that had a likeness to his Lord in it.

In this was the greatness of that disciple. His

image rises before us in a simple majesty of personal power. For all the time he was trying to improve himself, he was battling his besetting sins, whatever they were, he was praying for higher attainments in grace.

It is a sad sign almost always when a young Christian becomes impatient of reproof, and begins to suspect those who would seek to give him help. It does not matter much how we reach it; but surely the aim of our religious life ought to be, to become more free from faults, and more advanced in holiness. He, who will kindly check us when we are going too far, prompt us when we are laggard, teach us when we are ill-informed, and encourage us a little when we are trying to do our best—he is our truest friend.

Again, we learn here the deleterious influence of a defective theology. When our Lord tried to give his disciples clearer instruction concerning the atonement, showing how he should have to die on the cross, this impetuous man Peter began to chide him, and plead with him to give all that part of his work up. He was not evangelical in his views.

The suffering of Jesus Christ is really the center of all proper understanding of the gospel. He who has not embraced that as the foundation truth of his piety and his hope of heaven, has not yet attained the repose of an intelligent faith. If Peter's absurd counsel to the world's Redeemer had been heard and heeded, not one human soul would ever have been saved.

It is not possible that our Lord came to this earth

merely to live an exemplary life, and set a pattern of moral correctness, however attractive and beautiful. He came to die, that men might be delivered from the curse of God's broken law. Now to have all the brave love of Simon for Jesus, and yet be so bitterly mistaken as to be willing to miss the death at Jerusalem, is faulty to the last degree. No wonder our Lord would not bear a suggestion so abhorrent.

So we see what to say when unintelligent teachers tell us to throw away our notions of sacrifice. The Devil himself would well approve a theological system which would simply omit Christ's death on the cross. Hence, when any visionary would tempt us with a philosophic scheme of mere conduct to surrender this grand doctrine of justification by faith through a Redeemer crucified, our words of defence and repudiation could not be better chosen than Christ chose his: “Get thee behind me, Satan!”

Finally, we may learn from this story what is the best preparation for usefulness among the tempted and tried: it is simply to have been tempted and tried ourselves.

Here we come back to Simon Peter's two wonderful letters once more. He learned his wisdom in the school of falling and failure. So you see how tenderly he speaks, how impressively he warns, how affectionately he encourages. Any poor, troubled, inconsistent Christian would do well to study what he had to say. “Humble yourselves,” he pleads, “under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time.”

Do not disrespect Simon Peter to-day, because you hear the Lord call him "Satan." For remember how Jesus bore with him to the end. And no words of Simon's are more pathetic than those he uses when he says: "Account that the long-suffering of our Lord is salvation."

All we need is to move forward, and keep moving. And as I close this chapter, I chose to end it with those fitting sentences of Peter himself, the last he ever spoke to the churches: "Ye, therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness. But grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever. Amen."

CHAPTER XXIII.

“WITH HIM IN THE HOLY MOUNT.”

Somewhere we have all met the story of a Spanish artist who painted the scene of the Last Supper, choosing the moment in which our Lord was replying to Judas, “Thou hast said.” One of the bystanders, designing to offer merited compliment to a work so excellent, directed attention to the naturalness of the wine glowing in the glasses on the board. To his surprise the painter, with an expression of impatient disgust, immediately dashed his brushes over the unoffending goblets, completely erasing them at a stroke.

“Nothing shall be permitted to remain on my canvas,” he exclaimed, “that can even for a moment arrest the eye of a beholder enough to turn it from the countenance of the Christ.”

All this is true of Scripture study; with such a spirit each of us ought always to depict the incidents of the sacred narrative. Jesus Christ should be exhibited—as he really is—the one center of all excellence and attraction. Hence, it is not easy to conduct our story of Simon Peter’s life without seeming sometimes to cross what more appropriately belongs to the life of our divine Lord.

But here in the history of the Transfiguration it surely is not either necessary or becoming that we should pass by the suggestive circumstances which attended the scene. Nor is the companionship in

which Jesus stood without spiritual instruction. Nor even is the behavior of the slumberous disciples profitless as a reminder of our human weakness in the hour of greatest advantage.

A few words are needed here concerning the spot before we attempt to draw nigh the spectacle ; where was this " mountain apart ?"

The current tradition has been undisturbed for many centuries that this august event took place upon Mount Tabor. There is nothing in the sacred Scriptures to invalidate the statement, and surely there is no unfitness, intrinsically, in the locality rendering it unworthy. The weight of scholarly authority seems going steadily in favor of some spur of Mount Hermon as the locality chosen for this scene. Opinion may carry the day, but the arguments do not help much. And there will always remain a tranquilly disposed few who will sympathize with good Bishop Hall in his deprecation of needless change: " For the place, tradition hath taken it still for Tabor ; and I list not to disturb it without warrant."

Up into this mountain, then, we understand our Lord one evening went to pray. There he was transfigured ; " His raiment became shining exceeding white as snow, so as no fuller on earth can white them: and there appeared unto them Elias, with Moses: and they were talking with Jesus." Grand, vague, and beautiful that magnificent spectacle rises upon the devout vision.

Five persons besides Jesus stood on that mountain

together. He took with him three—James, Peter, and John; and there came to him on his arrival two more—Moses and Elijah. Suppose we look upon this scene as the earliest union prayer-meeting known to New Testament times. Then we should see that one man represented the Prophets, one the Law, and one the Gospel—the three grand dispensations of divine grace. Then we should notice, also, in the assembly that two persons had been dead, and three were living, and one was wearing the supernatural glory which the living are said to receive when they enter the rest that remaineth.

So there comes a lesson here at the very beginning of our patient study: if ever the church on earth shall be united into one body, it will be when all names and rituals and dispensations are gathered most obediently around the one Christ.

Three “beholds” are introduced into the narrative which is given in Matthew’s Gospel as to the particulars of this vision of the transfiguration; they render his account exceedingly picturesque and spirited. These will furnish us a sufficient analysis.

I. “Behold! Moses and Elias!” What did the presence of these ancient prophets on this mysterious occasion with Jesus really mean? There must have been some powerful reason for summoning men from the dead, “who appeared in glory, and spake of his decease, which he should accomplish at Jerusalem.” We must conclude that there was, in the purpose of this resumption of Christ’s divinity, the plan to show that all the teachings which the law and the prophets

had offered were united with and centered in the atonement he was here on earth to work out for human sin.

Strange indeed, and otherwise inexplicable, is it to find in such a moment joined with the Saviour the sudden and miraculous appearance of these men so long dead. Those colossal leaders of ancient times, whose very history appears to step from mountain to mountain—as if they were fitted to tread only the high places of the earth—now stood sharing the celestial glory of the Son of God before the astonished gaze of the disciples. But stranger and more startling still is it to find them conversing only on the one theme of redemption by the gospel,—“his decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem.” They talked over the old, old story of the cross, as the subject of highest and deepest interest to all.

That very doctrine, then, which Simon Peter had found so difficult, was perfectly familiar to both of these glorified prophets. All the types of Moses, and all the predictions of Elijah, now hurried to come and make modest obeisance to the substance and the realities of Jesus as he fulfilled them. These Old Testament symbolisms and ceremonials advanced now out from the shadows, to arrange themselves around the story of atonement—like the sheaves of the sons of Jacob around the sheaf of the typical son Joseph.

Nor is this all that seems to be taught. The unexpected reappearance of such guests upon this occasion cannot be without important meaning as to the state of the blessed ones in heaven. We find the disciples

going away conversing about the resurrection of the dead, and asking what it could mean. Evidently our Lord designed to offer here this new doctrine of another life. How real are both worlds to the confidence of an intelligent and unwavering belief! Mark these forms—recognized, named, shining in glory. It is plain they were bodies, though immediately from the celestial presence of God. Fifteen hundred years had passed since Moses had left this land of dying men, and from the summit of Mount Nebo had entered the land of the eternally living. And nine hundred years had passed since Elijah had been caught up in the whirlwind to an infinite existence beyond the stars. Yet here they were alive and speaking, in no feature injured or changed. “Them that sleep in Jesus” Jesus was already beginning to “bring with him.”

The doctrine of the resurrection was up to this time measurably unknown and always difficult. These disciples had “had Moses and the prophets;” would they believe any better “if one rose from the dead”? Here, then, singularly enough, Moses in person and one of the most notable of the prophets did rise from the dead. They were offering in their own presence the most palpable and convincing evidence of the life and safety of those who had died. It is worth holding, this thought of comfort: how close seems that future to our present when fifteen hundred years are not allowed to count in the reckoning! How very near appears that abode of the redeemed when the communion of saints is achieved so easily! Said

Beza, when Calvin died, "Now is heaven more dear, and now is coming death less dreadful!"

II. While this conversation went on with Jesus, a new wonder was displayed: "Behold! a cloud!" All the evangelists take pains to mention this phenomenon in all its details; Matthew, however, adds an epithet which no other narrator employs, and it is a singularly specific term of description. He says it was "a bright cloud." And this does not mean a lit cloud, as if something was shining upon it; it was a luminous cloud, and from itself came its wonderful brilliance. It is likely the display took place in the darkness, somewhere between the midnight and the dawn.

There are some other peculiarities in the language here, artlessly scattered through the chapters of the three historians, of which notice might not ordinarily be taken by the cursory reader. Peter proposed to erect three *tabernacles*. The voice came out of a *cloud*. They talked of a *deccase*. The entire scenery of this transfiguration drama is intensely in the Old Testament spirit; it seems to savor of the ceremonial and the ritual. For the word *deccase* in the Greek is *exodus*. There was an ancient exodus once of great historic moment and symbolic meaning. There were tabernacles in that day; and over the chief tabernacle of all was a cloud; and out of that cloud came often a voice which shook the mercy-seat.

Remember also that once before, away upon another mountain, Moses had seen a bush lit without being consumed, and a voice had likewise spoken on that occasion from out of the midst of it. And re-

member that Elijah had once had a vision in a mountain also, and in that case there had been a storm-cloud and a luminous fire, and the voice which spoke to him was small and still. Both of these prophets had been made afraid by the presence of God and had covered their faces as the disciples here covered theirs.

We readily perceive, therefore, from all the surroundings of this spectacle, that our Lord meant to identify the *spirit* of that old dispensation with the new, as well as the church. He himself had dwelt in the pillar of cloud before which Moses was wont to remain uncovered. He personally was the “Angel-Jehovah” who had guided Israel through the great and terrible wilderness while they dwelt in tabernacles. Hence, the light in the cloud which these disciples were now looking upon was the same as that which used to glimmer on the mercy-seat. All the old economy was passing away into the new. All that the ancient dispensation had inculcated in the law—all that it had revealed in the visions of the seers—was simply the fact and the meaning of the atonement which Jesus was just making in the “decease” to be accomplished at Jerusalem.

III. This is not left to conjecture: “Behold! a voice!” While they were looking and wondering, words fell down out of the cloud: “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him.” It was this voice which made especial impression on the memory of Simon Peter. Thirty years after, when all injunctions of secrecy were removed,

this apostle put it into writing and told the entire world what the disciples had thought about it. No one can read his glowing language without being convinced that they reckoned this scene as the main confirmation of gospel truth: "For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eye-witnesses of his majesty. For he received from God the Father honor and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased. And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount. We have also a more sure word of prophecy: whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the daystar arise in your hearts."

It would seem as if more might be made than usually is made of this transfiguration scene as an argument for the truth of our religion. That voice from heaven is the summons of Jehovah in person to the world at large. It was in the Old Testament; here it is in the New. It was spoken at the baptism once before. The willful race of unbelievers may cry out in derision, "It thunders!" But one day that voice will be heard calmly saying again: "I sent my Son to you long ago, and bade you hear him; why did you not listen then to what I gave him to say?"

We turn now from the bright and beautiful spectacle of these glorified visitants on the mount, to the

somewhat more prosaic picture of the three living men who accompanied Jesus. Specially, as a revelation of Simon Peter the rest of the story will command our attention. Three particulars may be noted: his inexplicable slumber, his characteristic presumption, and his unnecessary alarm.

It seems that during most of this vision all of the disciples were afflicted with a most unfortunate and irresistible drowsiness.

Really, such an occurrence demands explanation, which is not furnished, and an apology, which is not given. Offer all the charitable excuse we can—say this was near dawn, and they had been awake during the night—say they were completely exhausted with a continuous solicitude—say they were physically worn out with daily journeying—there yet remains the fact that these same favored three persons slept in the same way during the agony in Gethsemane. Whether Jesus suffered or shone, it seemed alike nothing to them.

What a pitiful comment this makes on poor weak human nature. Compare Moses and Elijah here, at the moment when they came to the summit of the mountain, with these fishermen whom they met. The celestial beings are all alive with activity, fairly palpitating in their eager vitality; the earthly witnesses are dull and heavy, lying in slumberous length upon the sward! How much these disciples lost can never be known. The transfiguration was full in progress when they had the first glimpses of it. How long had those heavenly visitants been there?

How did they arrive? Did Elijah journey back to the earth with the same pageantry as he left it? Was that chariot of fire in the sky again, and the whirlwind around it? Is it possible that Michael brought back the body of Moses, for which, as Jude somewhat obscurely tells us, he contended with Satan? The imagination runs riot when it conjectures what perhaps Peter might have seen, if only he had been wakeful from the start.

Sleep is always a risk and a peril. It proves weakness. He that keepeth Israel neither slumbers nor sleeps. The enemy sowed tares while the husbandman slept. The bridegroom came and hurried by, while those foolish virgins were asleep. Sisera lost his life when Jacl found his head on a pillow. But spiritual drowsiness evidences more than mere weakness; it intimates guilt. The Bride in the Canticle slept, and the Spouse forsook her.

Just here the language becomes singularly graphic. These bewildered men appear to have been stirred by such excitement around them, and at last are thoroughly aroused to look and to listen. A swift moment only seems to have been granted; for even as they are alertly gazing on the scene, the group is breaking up. Moses is withdrawing, and Elijah is on the wings of the whirlwind again.

“And it came to pass as they departed from him, Peter said unto Jesus, Master, it is good for us to be here: and let us make three tabernacles; one for Thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias: not knowing what he said.”

It is a comfort to find that when Simon was waked up, he was thoroughly waked, and was entering into the spirit of the majestic vision with intense enthusiasm of delight. He heard their blessed converse, and saw their wonderful presence, and his heart was full. The proposal he made was that three tents should be erected, and Elijah and Moses should arrange to abide there, and indeed all that choice company should simply remain on the mountain. This suggestion was surely presumptuous in the highest extreme. For it involved the same folly of misconception for which Peter was rebuked.

It is remarkable that this disciple, who was never specially abashed, did not dare address any one except Jesus on this occasion. It was characteristic of Peter to think he must say something upon the point; but he appears to have had a laudable reluctance to put questions to those who, as he had every reason to believe, had come from the dead. But we must observe what a singular blending there is in his mind of ecstatic experience with mere matter of fact. A pure unselfishness, at any rate a fresh self-forgetfulness, shines out in his proposition. He was quietly satisfied to remain out in such welcome company night and day. John and James and himself desired no cover. But a vague thought of exposure and discomfort in the surroundings was mingled with this offer of shelter, as he recollected how unprotected and unprovided for they were on the hill.

Now we do not exhaust the register of Simon's presumption in merely rehearsing the history of these

suggestions concerning Jesus and the two celestial visitants. He made also a fresh suggestion concerning himself and the other two disciples who were with him. He proposed to remain where he was, because he was perfectly happy in such wonderful companionship. He exclaimed: "It is good for us to be here!" He wanted to build some tabernacles and stay there on the mountain indefinitely. "Good for us:" yes, but what for the world of woe and toil and tears all around them? Oh, no! there was stern work yet to be done before permanent home could be found with the prophets and the witnesses of old. When luxury of emotional enjoyment interferes with necessary toil, it becomes no more than religious dissipation.

There is admonition in the old monkish tale. A recluse had made it his prayer that he might see Jesus in person. The vision came: the sight filled his room, and flooded the entire space with luminous shining. He fell on his knees. At that instant the clock tolled for noon and he must go forth to feed the paupers as usual at the gate. Should he leave the chamber and lose the spectacle? He went and did his duty, and came back in tears, wondering whether he should ever dare to pray again, and whether his vision would ever return. He was comforted and amazed, as he entered his cell, to find the great Light waiting for him yet:—

"Nay, wonder not!" the Vision said:
"Because thou wentest forth, I stayed.
Hadst thou remained to enjoy the sight,
I would have taken instant flight!"

It becomes us also to note carefully here the unnecessary fright of these three disciples, before we forsake the exposition altogether. The moment Simon's proposal had been made there came a decided manifestation from heaven itself: “While he thus spake, there came a cloud, and overshadowed them: and they feared as they entered into the cloud.” Forth from this cloud, as we have seen already, came a great Voice, attesting the divine pleasure: “And when the disciples heard it, they fell on their face, and were sore afraid.”

It is plain that these men were frightened at the oncoming of that tremendous arch and canopy of shadow. The phraseology is perhaps obscure, but there is hardly room for doubting that the words refer to the entering in of Moses and Elias, not of James and John and Peter. They (these disciples) feared, as they (the heavenly visitants) entered into the cloud. Possibly they all were for a single instant enveloped together. The men trembled at the first. The simple record reads that they feared *as they entered into* the cloud, but not after they had entered in. No doubt they felt the mysterious swooping down upon them of this solemn darkness, which was lit through all its thickness—a cloud that dazzled while it blinded.

In the rush of excited feeling they flung their faces on the sward. This was the moment for interposition; our Lord drew near at once: “And Jesus came and touched them, and said, Arise, and be not afraid. And suddenly, when they had looked round

about, they saw no man any more, save Jesus only with themselves.”

Is not this just the rule of Christian experience? Are none of us rebuked by this story? Do we not undergo needless alarm as some cloud of bereavement or trouble spreads its folds over us? A shock at the entering in, but *what* right afterwards? Enter, foreboding doom; but looking up, find Jesus! Dare darkness for one moment, then behold a Transfiguration!

CHAPTER XXIV.

FISHING TO PAY TRIBUTE.

The reception which on this occasion our Lord with his disciples meets on entering Capernaum is very striking from the absence of all display. No crowds come forth into the street for gifts of healing or with greetings of peace. A change has passed upon the history. Capernaum has evidently been growing harder. Spite must have been stirring up strife. Small malignities are coming to the surface. Townspeople and neighbors are getting jealous.

For example: no sooner was Simon settled at home again than he began to be harassed in regard to his money matters. Being the ostensible householder, he appears to have been reckoned as responsible for all the members of his family. And one day he found himself somewhat abruptly challenged with the implication that Jesus was neglecting the dues of the temple in a very mean sort of way: "They that received tribute-money came to Peter and said, Doth not your master pay tribute?"

The rendering in our version is a little unfortunate here in the use of the word "tribute." It seems to connect this incident with that other in Jesus' history in which some superscription of Cæsar's image upon a coin plays a part in the argument. But this was not a civil impost at all. It

had nothing to do with the imperial government, but was one of the old theocratic payments of the Israelite nation, dating back to the times of the Exodus. It will be of interest that we rehearse the ancient record concerning it :

“ And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, When thou takest the sum of the children of Israel, according to those that are numbered of them, then shall they give every man a ransom for his soul unto the Lord, when thou numberest them ; that there be no plague among them, when thou numberest them. This they shall give, every one that passeth over unto them that are numbered, half a shekel after the shekel of the sanctuary : (the shekel is twenty gerahs :) half a shekel for an offering to the Lord. Every one that passeth over unto them that are numbered, from twenty years old and upward, shall give the offering of the Lord. The rich shall not give more, and the poor shall not give less, than the half shekel, when they give the offering of the Lord, to make atonement for your souls. And thou shalt take the atonement money from the children of Israel, and shalt appoint it for the service of the tent of meeting ; that it may be a memorial for the children of Israel before the Lord, to make atonement for your souls.”

So we see that these people who made such demand upon Simon were not Roman tax-gatherers, but only ordinary collectors of this Jewish contribution for religious services. Even Augustine glides into the singular mistake of connecting this

incident with the precept, "Render *tribute* to whom *tribute* is due."

The Rabbins give us some particulars concerning this toll as customs had finally settled it. It was to be paid over the whole world by every Israelite who had reached the age of twenty years. Its purpose was to meet the running expenses of the temple worship, and it was used in purchasing incense, show-bread, wood for the ordinary fires of morning and evening sacrifices, red-heifers, scapegoats, and all the miscellaneous need for the services. Such an amount—about thirty cents of our money to each man—would yearly produce extraordinary incomes in the aggregate; and these were generally conveyed to Jerusalem by persons standing in great honor in the countries where they were levied. The taxes were payable each twelvemonth, about the time of the passover; but in individual cases they often ran behindhand. It is said that the official receivers were accustomed to set two chests before them, one to hold contributions for the current year, the other to take in the arrearages of years that were past. For there was no power beyond orthodox public sentiment to compel payment of this atonement-money to the collectors from any persons who neglected or refused it. That poor nation knew that generosity then was a voluntary virtue.

But about the time of this occurrence, as we learn from one of the Jewish annalists, there had been a fierce and famous controversy between the Pharisees and Sadducees upon this point. The disputations

Pharisees claimed that the regular rendering of this theocratic half-shekel impost should be made compulsory ; but the easy-going Sadducees denied all authority for enforcing it, and pressed the consideration that all contributions for God's service were absolutely good for nothing unless they were entirely free-will.

And the record runs that the Pharisees had carried the day in the dispute. So the question which Capernaum people put to Simon was equivalent to the inquiry whether Jesus proposed to take sides with the Sadducees, and thus decline the payment altogether ; for it is assumed in their words that our Lord was behindhand already.

One thing is very noticeable here. Eminent teachers of their law, as well as priests, it had always been owned, were exempted from this imposition. Hitherto the inhabitants of that privileged town had not denied to Jesus even the most elevated recognition. There was more than one day in Capernaum's history when at Simon's hospitable door "all the city was gathered together." No honor the people could render was deemed too good for this young and miracle-working rabbi. It was one glad cry among them, as they were amazed at his deeds and at his doctrines alike : "We never saw it on this fashion." In his absence the popular wind of fame had shifted into another quarter. Capernaum, exalted to heaven, was now getting ready to be cast down into hell. The coarse minds thought the day had arrived now for this so-called prophet to begin

to settle his rates. Questions of contribution admit of no favor. The only remnant of reverence we can detect is found in the fact that they put the question to Simon instead of Jesus. For this shows that there were some who retained a somewhat salutary awe of our Lord still.

Simon answers with his usual promptness: "He saith, Yes." He accepts without any objection the implication that he was a servant, and Jesus was his master: "Doth not your master pay the double-drachma?" Without an instant's hesitation, he replies, as if repelling an insinuation: "Of course he does."

We are compelled to acknowledge that this disciple made a mistake in thus pledging Jesus to any Jewish observance without previously consulting him; but no one can have the heart to censure an answer so honest, when he remembers the motive which prompted this amiable haste. Most admirable is Peter's solicitude lest the name of his Lord should be reproached. The church, even in our time of conspicuous coldness, would stand better before the world if each of us were only equally jealous with a great jealousy for the fame of the cause and the kingdom of the risen Redeemer.

Still, it seems probable that this friend of Jesus afterwards had his doubts about the prudence of the rejoinder he had made. A misgiving may even have arisen, in the narrowness of their finances, as to the possible payment of such a sum; but more likely he grew embarrassed with the fear that he

might have compromised his great Master's position. Just at this point we are interested to discover a fine illustrative proof of Jesus' minute omniscience; for, as Simon entered, he instantly showed by commencing the conversation that he was acquainted with all that had passed in the street. "And when he was come into the house, Jesus prevented him, saying, What thinkest thou, Simon? of whom do the kings of the earth take custom or tribute? of their own children, or of strangers?"

Martin Luther, in some very interesting comments upon this interview, calls attention to the frank and friendly way in which Jesus administered the needed corrective to his hasty host. It puts before our imaginations the fine terms of pleasant familiarity on which they stood. This word "prevented" in our version means only *anticipated*; Simon was going to speak, but Jesus spoke before a word had fallen from him. Then the conversation runs easily on.

"Do monarchs at the head of human governments collect their customs on imports, or their tributes for privileges, from the members of the royal family, or from other people?" Peter saith unto him, "Of strangers." "Then are the children free," Jesus replies to him.

To this statement the disciple had only one answer to return. Kings never tax their *sons* for ordinary revenues. Then Jesus passed the illustration over instantly to the case in hand: "I am a son of the King of kings; the toll which these col-

lectors are demanding is asked for God's sake as earthly tributes are asked for princes' sake ; I, therefore, am not bound to pay it ; children—certainly, royal children—are free !”

There is a sense in which our Lord includes his disciples in these statements likewise ; for he uses “children” in the plural number, although we are told again and again Christ was the “only begotten Son” of the Highest. Moreover, he proceeds at once to a plan which shall make provision on the same basis for Simon as for himself, as if both were alike free. So he avows the grand principle that among Christians all gospel privileges should be paid for voluntarily, and never of constraint. “*Liberi sunt liberi.*”

There can be no reason for mistaking our lesson in this declaration. It is aimed directly against all systems of union between Church and State which force the believing people to sustain the institutions of religion by legal constraint. All church-rates necessary for support of worship should be entirely free-will.

So Simon was corrected at once, and must have seen in one instant flash of discovery that he had gone too far in committing Jesus to pay the Pharisees' tax. Still, it gives us surprise now to find such an emphatic denial of this imposition followed, as it is in the story, by an acquiescence immediate and unreserved.

A complete reversal of decision is announced though based upon an entirely new consideration.

Jesus says he judges it best to start no scandal; the matter is not of sufficient importance to insist upon; he does not propose to make a stand on his rights with any undue stress. He intimates, however, that Simon's toll shall be paid as well as his own; but not because of an inherent justice in the demand—only because of the expediency of compliance. He desires to propitiate the feelings of the populace, and not needlessly to arouse animosity or provoke prejudice. Then he turns to this fisherman, rapidly unfolding his project: "Notwithstanding, lest we should offend them, go thou to the sea, and cast an hook, and take up the fish that first cometh up; and when thou hast opened his mouth, thou shalt find a piece of money; that take, and give unto them for me and thee."

Now we ought to notice the exquisite delicacy with which this only true Son of God, the Lord of Glory, manages the admission, so remarkable in its condescension, that all Christians are to be summarily reckoned with himself in this spiritual freedom as children, and yet preserves his own majesty from too close a familiarity. He does not say, "Give them this money for *us*:" but he says, "Give them for me—and thee." While he counts them as one with him in the freedom, he does not admit that they are equal with him in the sonship; he makes them remember that there is a distinction.

And, as if to render that distinction the more evident, this divine Master proceeds to work a miracle in the line of Simon's ancient profession. Which

miracle is remarkable for two particulars: it is the only one mentioned in the New Testament which Christ was known to work for his own benefit; and it is the only one which is left without a record of its accomplishment—being given to us simply as a command, with its details unindicated and undescribed.

Christ bids his disciple go out on the lake, not with a seine but a hook, and when the first fish should come up out of the deep water he should open its mouth, and there he would discover a Roman coin of the exact value of those two half-shekels which were now claimed by the Capernaum people as due to the temple collectors.

It seems hardly worth while to dwell upon the absurd attempts which have been made to rationalize away this part of the inspired record. It is abruptly denied by some that any miracle was actually wrought after all. And indeed, so much as this is true: in not another instance of our Lord's history do we find him issuing such a command with no subsequent account of the result. But surely, a conversation like this would have reached a most lame and impotent conclusion if everything ended where the chapter leaves it. With the infinite God, however, we may say to command is to perform.

Then, too, the sneer of Paulus that miracles must have cheapened if Jesus would work one for half-a-crown, will have to be patiently laid alongside of the puerile conjecture that what was proposed and what is meant is this—Simon must go and catch the fish,

and then open his own mouth ; that is, he must cry the fish for public sale in the market and so earn the shekel—a most extraordinary price, by the way, in those times for any fish that could be captured and pulled in with a hook. So with the cavil of another anxious critic, who says that Jesus was simply playful and sarcastic with his heedless disciple, and intended to admonish him in a pleasant and even jocose manner that he had run before he was sent :

“ As you have committed me with a blunder, you might as well go now and relieve me with a wonder. You did a presumptuous thing easily ; let us see you try your hand at one that is impossible ! ”

In the midst of all this nonsense the only comment that can be treated seriously is this—fishes do often swallow bright articles, and a silver coin was just about the size and the brilliance to prove attractive near the shore of the lake. It is not easy to see where any harm would come from admitting this conjecture, if a disturbed heart should deem it any better than the supposition that Christ created the money where it was found. Then the miracle, as it stands, would consist in the six particulars which the pious Bengel enumerates : “ 1. That something shall be caught—2. And that quickly—3. There shall be money in a fish—4. And that found in the fish's mouth—5. The sum shall be just what is needed—6. And that it shall be a Roman coin made out of silver.”

From this point in the story everything is now left to the imagination of each devout reader. Simon had

already been with Jesus too long to distrust his divine power in an exigency like this. There must have been something exceedingly impressive in the quick acquiescence of his faith. One would like to witness such a scene from the first preparation to the final result. Very singular must have been the feeling of Simon Peter on his way to the beach alone, taking some old rod and line that knew his hand the best, and pushing off in some boat which had more than once felt the spring from his oars in the days gone by. Out on the placid water at last, he must have experienced a solemn sense of awe as he flung his glance across the surface of that sea, conscious that somewhere in its serene depth there must be one inarticulate creature working its way towards his hook in unconcerned obedience to divine command.

Over went the line, and the first cast brought the anticipated prey. Eager and trembling Simon's hands must have been, in the excited instant when he forced open the jaws to search for the promised piece of silver. With what inexpressible emotion would this man remove that glittering coin—bearing its quaint image of the helmeted head on its surface, and the old rude letters on the obverse. It does not appear as if there could be a more appropriate exclamation for him to make than that which he had had occasion with the others of his astonished friends to utter once before, when on this same sheet of water: "What manner of man is this, that even the sea obeys him!"

Here is afforded one of the finest illustrations conceivable of the Lord's supremacy. He submitted to the imposed taxes of the Pharisees in order to teach to all ages the lesson that Christian liberty should sometimes be limited by a regard for the good of irreligious men around us: "Lest we should offend them." But this he did in such a way as to preserve his majesty unsullied. He condescended to touch a human toll, but his fingers were clothed with omnipotence when they came in contact with the silver coin.

Simon knew what fishing in Lake Gennesaret meant; and we may be sure he had learned at the last that Jesus was indeed what even his own words at Cæsarea Philippi had admitted him to be—what a wide Christendom has confessed since—"the Son of the living God."

Then, too, this incident affords a fine example of our Lord's omnipotent sway in the kingdom of nature even to its uttermost limits. For the time being, the spoken word of this King of the kingdom of truth was hidden in the mouth of an uncaught fish. The stability of the Messiahship rested upon the fickle movements of this most agile and most uncertain of all the creatures of God. Just a half-mile of swimming less or more in the twelve miles length of that inland sea would have put eternal veracity in peril. An hour earlier or later—one fish more expeditious in arriving at this hook than another—a slight mistake in the mere mechanical knack of angling—would have sent Simon Peter home to

Capernaum a disappointed, doubting man. Talk to him about fishing to pay tribute—let critics tell him that these creatures often swallow bright things—and most likely in his business-like way he would answer :

“Very well ; but this was the first one of that kind I myself ever caught which did it. Perhaps some other fisherman here in Galilee would like to go out and do the same thing over now !”

To one who, in despite of all its confusions, thoroughly understands it, what an orderly universe this of ours must always appear to be ! A most graphic picture of the subordination of the races and species is that which here rises upon our imaginations. A fish—one poor little fish—for a moment, stands in the cycle of eternal history. It surrenders its life on an issue between Pharisees and Sadducees about temple-taxes ! Round and round in the familiar waters of the lake it may have gone a myriad of times before this ; never, however, until now would any special interest of the kingdom of heaven depend upon the punctual accuracy of its arrival at the side of Simon’s boat : to-day it must come up exactly !

Such an incident is calculated to hold the popular mind firmly through all the ages. Even to this day in the East men catch a sort of prey which they call “Saint Peter’s fish”—the doré, taking its name from the French word which means *worshipped*—bearing like the haddock, just under its gills, the dark marks (so the villagers fable) of the apostle’s thumb and finger as he was supposed to grasp it

roughly in order to extract the silver coin. This is of course only a folly of superstition ; but it evidences that the miracle has fastened itself in the notice of the common people.

Nor is this attribute of omnipotence alone exhibited here ; omniscience also is suggested. We have already remarked that Christ seems to have known all that was passing in the street while Simon and the neighbors were holding their conversation. And now we see that the lofty and the lowly are together under the same divine observation. The minnow in the lake, and the apostle in the town, alike are within the same reach of a constant survey. In this very moment when Jesus was surprising Simon with the disclosure that he perceived his thoughts, he was sweeping the hand of his divinity among the far-off waters of that Capernaum fishing-ground with his beckoning gesture for one special finny creature he was acquainted with to come swiftly up now with the vaster surprise of a miracle in its mouth. We never know exactly whose history our lives might be writing, nor exactly what life of man or fish is writing ours !

Perhaps it is well to dismiss this part of the record with an early recognition of its main instruction.

Our Lord must have had one explicit purpose in his action on this occasion. And his example bears with great force upon the doctrine of Christian expediency. The structure of the question put to Simon Peter appears weak, querulous, even timid. These Jewish collectors do not exhibit a temper like

that of a Roman publican rudely demanding tribute. If Jesus had refused to pay the money, they had no pressure to bring to bear. They could only call him a recreant Israelite. But our Saviour wrought this miracle lest even a toll-gatherer should carp at the free gospel he came to proclaim. It was lawful for him to decline the tax; but he did not deem it expedient to do so.

Thus we reach the principle. He enunciated the same when he came to Jordan to be baptized: "Thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness." This half-shekel was called "an atonement money for sin;" and though he had no sin, he paid the ransom for his undefiled soul like one of the sinners he came to redeem. For he desired to show to the ages that he never used his liberty, nor suffered his followers to use theirs, "for a cloak of maliciousness."

So our lesson is simple. We must not let our "good be evil spoken of" by reason of superciliousness in disregard of others' prejudices. Better for us to suffer inconvenience and humiliation than wound one for whom it is possible Christ may have died.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE TRUE DOCTRINE OF FORGIVENESS.

In the company of his Lord, Simon Peter had just now tediously come across the country, down from northern Palestine, to his established home beside the sea of Tiberias. From one suggestive expression employed by the evangelist Mark, who alone uses it, we infer that this disciple's mind had been very unpleasantly arrested by an awkward tameness and seclusion in the journey back from Cæsarea Philippi. While Jesus was passing through that region, we are told he "would not that any man should know it." This Simon Peter evidently dis-relished.

Moreover, our Lord occupied the time in conversation upon themes especially distasteful to some of those who followed him. For he openly crossed their hopes. He told them all, in a way which to Simon Peter at least seemed unnecessarily melancholy, that the Son of Man must suffer and be rejected, must be delivered up and killed, and this before many days should pass.

This disciple never did like such pensive interviews in private life. He preferred the crowds and the excitement when the common people stirred in the villages at their arrivals or came forth to meet them in the roads, thus rendering their ordinary tours

across the country frequently a sort of pageant. Such a solemn traverse, with only lonely revelations of coming disaster for a meditation, most likely exasperated Peter, and reminded him of the rebuke he had received on the occasion of his chiding Jesus for what he considered undue depression. We can imagine that he was quite glad to find himself once more among the curious fishmongers and the admiring gossips of Capernaum. Not even the wonderful disclosures of that scene on the transfiguration mountain seem to have been sufficient to raise his unusual heaviness of spirits; he came home half discouraged.

But even here he received a new check. His townsmen gave his company a far cooler reception than he expected. This disturbed his mind with additional annoyances. There can be suggested no reason for discrediting the generally-entertained belief concerning this period in Christ's life; it is assumed as true that he was accustomed, whenever he lingered in the vicinity, to share the accommodations of Peter in the city and remain under his roof. The miracle of healing which had been wrought upon his wife's mother, when she was recovered from her fever, would surely render Jesus a welcome guest. The gratitude of both women would make it easy for them to obey an injunction which came later on: "Use hospitality without grudging;" for they would cherish a companionship that saved life.

But something must have happened to sour Simon's temper more and more; for his questions

grow abrupt, and show the uneasy workings of an aroused and unamiable spirit. For example, he came one day to Jesus and asked with frankest directness: "Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times?" Jesus saith unto him, "I say not unto thee, Until seven times; but, Until seventy times seven."

He was thoroughly provoked. His meaning in pressing such inquiries is unmistakable. He could not get over the state of hurt feeling into which the demand for the tribute-money from Jesus had thrown him. He petulantly demands what shall be understood as the limit of forbearance with such people for a truly godly man in his times of excessive exasperation. "About how much of this sort of thing are Christian men expected ordinarily to stand?" Jesus replied to him out of the depth of a novel and far-reaching principle, overthrowing all the settled past reckoning of the ages in which Moses' law had prevailed.

It becomes vital to our purposes of present study that we see plainly the mood of mind out of which Simon's suggestion of "seven times" as a measure of endurance could go. But we should make a vast mistake if we simply discharge the meaning of his question upon a flitting flash of wrath which for a passionate hour provoked him. We shall appreciate both the inquiry and its answer better if we keep in memory the temper of the times in which all these men had been reared. One word of description will put before us the principle of the dispensation out

from which the question of this excited disciple rose. Men had for almost sixteen centuries been living under the law of *retaliation*. Pay off your enemy in kind—this had been an old and recognized rule for the whole generations past since a great prophet-leader had written the Pentateuch; and this Israel had accepted as fixed for fifteen hundred years before this simple-minded fisherman Simon Peter had been born. Moses had left on record these significant and specific enactments: “Thou shalt give life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burning for burning, wound for wound, stripe for stripe.” “And thine eye shall not pity; but life shall go for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot.”

This is what has been termed the “*lex talionis*.” And it certainly has had a vast array of natural advantages to it, or the world would never have used it so much. It is so customary lately to deride the ancient system of Moses, that a fair review of the great benefits it brought, the utilities it exhibited, and the services it rendered, might well be in order now and then. The law of retaliation was singularly helpful and effective; it is the easiest in application known to men.

1. For example, it met all peoples' notion of a swift convenience. It seemed to require no expensive and cumbersome machinery of court routine, as would every other system of administration of justice. For it constituted every man his own judge, jury, and sheriff. He took his case instantly in hand,

without troubling his neighbors to waste time with tribunals.

2. Then again, it met all men's considerations of equity. It looked eminently fair and just. A complete balance was instantly struck. The requital it proposed was the same in kind and measure. A blinded man put a bandage over his own eye as he started out vigorously with a beam in his hand to put squarely into his antagonist's eye. A limping traveler smote an exposed sinew on the limb of the one who had wounded him, and as they both dragged themselves around afterwards the neighbors perceived that the first man had a maimed sort of comfort.

3. It met all men's ideas of necessary retribution. Go where we will, we shall find the same impress of conviction in the human heart—wrong merits judgment; the criminal ought in no instance to escape free from the legitimate consequences of any act of violence he may have committed; be it what it may, he should be forced to suffer the penalty due to the crime.

For such reasons the law of retaliation has naturally become the recognized primary law for all nations and communities when first compacted into organized society. It has sometimes been rough in its application, but the instincts of mankind at large have turned to it until it could be supplanted by something milder, safer, and better. For it will be sure to show its disadvantages almost immediately. Sober second thought always discovers inevitable misfortunes in its last results.

1. To begin with, it perpetuated wrong, instead of relieving it. Everybody knows how some clans and tribes in history have taken up each other's quarrels. He who had lost a relation in war or by assassination felt it to be his duty, and a harsh public sentiment held him up to it, to pursue the family of the destroyer through the generations. That, however, did not help anything; it simply kept the whole community in a state of chronic fight and restless entanglements.

2. It excited malevolence in all hearts. Increasing bad passions, it perverted vengeance into revenge. There is a difference world-wide between this hot violence of an avenger of blood and the cool, collected, and calm infliction of a recognized penalty, under a majestic sanction of social authority, by a responsible officer of the law. A sheriff may shudder, and a judge may weep, and the discipline may render each more charitable to his fellow-men. But in times of retaliation the feuds openly grew fiercer; men in pursuit of blood became savage and abased themselves to the level of the most brutal of beasts.

3. It proved unfair in each administration. The man who is injured is the poorest sort of a judge to decide concerning the amount of his own wrong. Of course, he is the likeliest individual in the world to err in the register of reprisal. Life for life—yes: but one life is worth more than another under certain circumstances. An eye is not always an eye in each and every case alike; suppose a man has only

one eye left ! Moreover, I admit I am under prejudice somewhat as to my particular teeth and hands. To me they seem inevitably more valuable than yours. Thus always we may unconsciously overestimate our neighbor's trespasses, and underrate his rights. False standards are set up. Personal feeling blinds our judgment. We claim an unjust measure when we appear to claim only what we lost.

4. It left out of hope and reach all reconciliation to be effected between the belligerent parties. Retaliation allows no provision for the reclamation of an offender; it shows never a way for the restitution of the wrong. It acts to render the whole matter worse in every aspect. Standing armies, picket fences, and spring-guns all grow out of it. For perpetual investment and regular siege becomes the rule of social life; the community remains rude, unsettled, and never seems tranquil enough to be safe. Peaceable people suffer from others' fights.

5. Most of all, it used up material with uttermost recklessness of destruction. It wasted valuable men, and ruinously exhausted the products of human labor. To maim a workingman was bad enough; but to go and maim another was the foolishest and most pitiful sort of way to clear up the loss. Burning one dwelling because another had been burnt, reckoned two less homes in the shelter of which peace might dwell with plenty. To make one seeing man sightless would not make another sightless man see. Each loss of eyes, teeth, and hands was just doubled on every community. Putting a new beg-

gar down by the side of old Bartimæus, son of Timæus, only rendered it the worse for Jericho.

This, then, was the bearing of all that state of things out from under which Simon Peter put the question in the verse that has been quoted. The answer our Lord gave him in return was at once radical and revolutionary.

“Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth. But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil; but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also.”

What could he have desired to know further, when he challenged Jesus as he did in his inquiry concerning the exact number of times he was to forgive before he took vengeance? What was his purpose in suggesting seven pardons as the limit?

To forgive an injury signifies to restore the person who has inflicted it to terms of reconciliation. Simon found out that in such an act on his part there was demanded a difficult magnanimity. Those Capernaum people were trying him seriously. Was there to be no end to their smiting his cheek, and to his turning the other cheek for them to do it again!

The Jews were accustomed to say, Bear with thine enemy three times, and then duty is done. It is fair to admit that Peter here goes beyond his national traditions. Three was considered a sacred number, but seven was more sacred still. This decent disciple supposes that seven times would be satisfactory even to Christ. Should he have to forgive oftener than that?

Remember there never had been any forgiveness inculcated before the time of Christ. If any instances seem on record in the Old Testament, they may easily be explained upon some other principle than what is religious. For example, the well remembered passage in the Book of Proverbs is the only verse which can be quoted legitimately: "If thine enemy be hungry, give him bread to eat; and if he be thirsty, give him water to drink: for thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head, and the Lord shall reward thee." And it is likely that this refers to nothing more than mere ingenious policy; you will defeat enemies more quickly if you demoralize them with embarrassing kindness when they expect violence. So as we read that David did not cut off the head of a man like King Saul, but cut off the skirts of his garments instead, we need not be pressed with the proof of his superiority in the highest reaches of Christian life, though we may admire his self-control. For we are perplexed enough to find a prayer in David's psalm like this, without being compelled all at once to admit his supreme excellence above his times:

"Arise, O Lord; save me, O my God: for thou hast smitten all mine enemies upon the cheek bone; thou hast broken the teeth of the ungodly. Break their teeth, O God, in their mouth: break out the great teeth of the young lions, O Lord. Let them melt away as waters which run continually: when he bendeth his bow to shoot his arrows, let them be as cut in pieces."

Such expressions as these in his devotions show that after all some explanation of David's reserve in attacking the monarch, from whom he had received so much abuse and treachery, must be offered besides what would be found in a high-minded and magnanimous sense of forgiveness of injury. Perhaps he was afraid of exasperating the people at large. Perhaps he was moved by some sort of reverent loyalty towards the person of the Lord's anointed. For this is all there could be under such a dispensation. The apostle quotes this passage as if he knew it had as yet never been understood. The New Testament spirit is not to be discovered in the Old Testament teachings. Men were expected to bluster, and complain, and resist, and defend themselves.

Now came a fresh revelation of revolutionary doctrine in the life and sermons of our Lord Jesus Christ. We must assume that Simon Peter remembered the lessons he had received earlier in his Master's ministry; but perhaps he never did thoroughly appreciate their reach. He was now groping around after some universal principle of application which would admit of a little easier play of the system under which he had been educated. For all that law of retaliation Jesus had substituted a new law of love. There can be no denial of the fact that the spirit of a free, full, Christian forgiveness is truly the most delicate plant that is ever put in the hard soil of the human heart. A man has to rise above his natural passions in order to exercise the grace of pardon. Self-control of the highest character is needed in it.

Simon Peter, for one, was not good at that. It was an unconcealed weakness of his to utter harsh words and often explode into tempestuous excitement. Forgiveness claims a showing of good will and a real generosity towards the man who has just touched our temper and done us an injury. But Simon felt that those neighbors of his who had offended him had never had the right to be cool to him, and to come around dunning him publicly for the half-shekel tax; this was an insult.

How could an irascible, provoked man be expected then—how can he be expected now—to relish calm, plain utterances, like those spoken long afterwards by the Apostle Paul?

“Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering; forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye.” “Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamor, and evil-speaking be put away from you, with all malice: and be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you.”

Now, this being the spirit of the new dispensation, this being really an acknowledged thing in Simon Peter’s experience, we need not suppose he was trying to get away altogether from it in application. The explanation of his words is found in the effort of his human ingenuity to draw a line of duty, up to which obedience could come, and then be quit of all

cumbersome responsibility. The emphasis of his question falls on the enumeration suggested: How many times shall I have to forgive?

Just think how one of Simon's temperament would have rejoiced to find it settled that when a seventh offence had been reached, there it would be actually religious to say to the injurious fellow: "Now you have to take your turn; you have exhausted your days of grace: do that thing only an eighth time, just once more now, and you will see what a muscular believer will be indulged in doing!"

It is really on record, in one of the old histories, that the rabbis of Simon's time rather encouraged people who were malevolently disposed to go on with a sort of heedlessness in their provocations (when they saw they unsuspectingly approached the prescribed limit of forbearance), as if they actually hoped there might be a fourth offence; for it was an understood thing that all beyond three would count. It is possible that a man with a violent temper, like this fisherman Simon, would wait with exemplary patience through seven insults, provided he would rest assured that an eighth chance in his favor would leave him free to luxuriate in some satisfying requital, after the legal and prescribed forbearance was used up.

But our Lord answered his disciple with a somewhat startling extension of the bounds. Seven times? Seventy times seven must be the limit of forgiveness, at the very least! There is no need of supposing that exactness of figures was designed to

be stated in these words. The four hundred and ninety times of forbearance, however, would cover the ground of most men's injuries. Christian forbearance should reach as far as a wrong could be felt; revenge should never be in order.

CHAPTER XXVI.

“AN HUNDRED-FOLD.”

At one point in the sacred history we meet the story of the young ruler who came to Jesus asking how he might inherit eternal life.

This man refused to sell his possessions and give the price to the poor, and so he would not come after Christ and follow him. The secret of entire consecration lies in the recital, and the lesson is taught to all the disciples who stood looking on. The disappointed inquirer goes away, and the scene grows picturesque as we watch those followers of our Lord gazing sorrowfully after him as he disappears from historic mention and knowledge, vanishing from their sight.

Simon Peter breaks the silence with his artless egotism, abruptly challenging attention to the better spirit he with the others had exhibited: “Lo, we have left all, and have followed thee.” The statement he makes is not doubted or denied; he receives a calm reply: “And Jesus answered and said, Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake and the gospel’s, but he shall receive a hundred-fold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come, eternal life.”

We should like to know whether this general principle is true in Peter's case, and whether it is to be trusted as true always. There are at least three tests which men are accustomed to apply when they attempt to measure any one's sacrifices by his successes afterwards in life : wealth, talents, and fame. Is it worth while just here to judge these disciples by such methods of estimate ?

Not a few of them had been fishermen ; five came from one town, and had, as we have learned already, been engaged in the same occupation for a period of years ; and of them Simon Peter was certainly one. The first question we should ask is this : " What had they really 'left?' "

Their home, for one thing ; they belonged nowhere now, but were going around with Jesus, a rabbi who had not where to lay his head. They had given up their boats, nets, all their implements of trade, and what we should call in modern terms, the " good will of their business." They had broken with their former comrades ; having become outcasts in the estimate of those who still adhered to the religion which they had abjured. They had forsaken their old lives with all the associations of their childhood and middle-age.

So we ask a second question : " Had they received anything as yet ? " Hints that any reader of the gospels can easily recall, aid us in constructing a reply. None of them had reached the end of his career as yet, and so, of course, the whole facts can not be recorded at present. But it is not necessary

for us to think they were deplorably wretched and forlorn. There were times in which they appeared to be in some sort of way at their former tasks. They had boats of such size that they became "partners" in the management of them. These must have been larger and more costly than those they left on the beach. They had "hired servants" to aid them in the drudgery. There are other indications especially of Simon Peter's prosperity later on. This man for one portion of his life resided at Capernaum, and the house he owned must have been of some considerable size in order to accommodate the throngs which were attracted to it by the miracles of the Messiah. John also had a house in Jerusalem to which he conducted the Virgin Mother after the crucifixion, and where for fifteen following years he gave her a comfortable home. He kept an acquaintance with the inmates of the high-priest's palace, such as secured his familiar entrance. Salome, his mother, was among those who ministered to Christ "of their substance," and who brought expensive aromatic balsams and spices for the embalming of the body of Jesus.

Nor is it necessary that we believe they were altogether unlettered and rude in their education. One expression there is in the Book of the Acts, which in our version has been forced to give an inaccurate notion of Peter and John. We are told that when the apostles were under arrest for the excitement produced by the healing of the lame man, the Jewish council "perceived that they were un-

learned and ignorant." These terms are exaggerated in the rendering they have received. It is not intended as a stately record that those preachers displayed a lamentable want of cultivation in their public efforts, and showed themselves coarse and illiterate. Such terms mean only that the supercilious Pharisees counted the apostles as without liberal learning—mere laymen, as it were, uninstructed in the letter of the law and the comments upon it.

Perhaps it might be allowable for us to look onward a little in our investigation. Simon Peter lived to preach sermons; and the popular esteem of them was very eminent, if we may judge from the effect of his eloquence and his logic. Three thousand converts were added to the company of believers as the fruits of one of them, and five thousand more converts as the fruits of another. Paul is considered the greatest of Christian scholars; and yet when he argued for the resurrection of Jesus he employed the same proofs, and quoted the same inspired texts as those which Simon had used before on the day of Pentecost.

There remains, then, the question of Simon Peter's fame. Did it reach the "hundred-fold" that was promised? Yes, after it had reached the "persecutions" also which were included in the same engagement.

Not many years ago, with a small company of tourists we stood upon the crown of the low hill in Rome, where the tomb of Cecilia Metella lifts itself beside the Appian Way. We enjoyed an uninter-

rupted reach of vision for miles away across the Eternal City. The Sabine mountains, lengthening out their straggling outlines, shadowy and blue, formed the framework of the landscape, on one side close to the Alban Hills. But the Campagna opened wide and free: at the first, desolate and bare, save that now and then the small wild flowers in the grass lit up the marshes with color; then, near the suburbs, there was here and there a villa; till, at last, the confused huddle of the houses began to display their red-tiled roofs, some campaniles blackened with time, many palaces, ruins, and churches—mingled in uninteresting masses of stone structure—all that goes to make up the modern town, the mystery and majesty of Rome.

But just when the afternoon sun drew the long shadows across the plains, and that wonderful glow in the west took possession of the atmosphere—that peculiar, indescribable, familiar, ruddiness of the Roman sunset—the yellow flitting over the violet, and the purple quivering delicately in the orange, with matchless shifting and interchange of hues—we recognized those vast edifices beyond the Tiber, which are grouped around the Vatican. And over irregular bulks of stone, rose that incomparable dome of St. Peter’s Cathedral, like a round bubble in the air, “floating over the worship of the city.” Then, as the wondrous beauty of that peerless cupola was disclosed, we all felt the meaning of Hawthorne’s grand phrases of description, and quoted them with thorough appreciation:—

“ At any nearer view, the grandeur of St. Peter’s hides itself behind the immensity of its separate parts, so that we see only the front, only the sides, only the pillared length and loftiness of the portico, and not the mighty whole ; but at this distance the entire outline of the world’s cathedral, as well as that of the palace of the world’s chief priest, is taken in at once. In such remoteness, moreover, the imagination is not debarred from rendering its assistance even while we have the reality before our eyes, and aiding the weakness of human sense to do justice to so grand an object. It requires both faith and fancy to enable us to feel, what is nevertheless so true, that yonder—in front of the purple outline of the hills—is the grandest edifice ever built by man, now painted against God’s loveliest sky.”

Next evening we were within the building at vespers. Down among the kneeling throng of devotees came the parting rays of daylight, striking through the upper windows over the arches. Mysterious music echoed around us through the corridors, played by organs concealed, and sung by sweet voices out of sight.

We stood leaning upon the stone railing which surrounds what they say is the sepulchre of Simon Peter. There, they tell us, is the dust of the old fisherman waiting for the resurrection morning. High above us rose the canopy of pillared bronze, fashioned out of plates which perhaps Paul saw on the Pantheon roof when he entered this imperial city, a prisoner of the Lord in chains. Beside that crypt,

beneath which is the so-called tomb of this son of Jonas, in all the glory of shining candles and reverent hearts, we stood for an hour in silence, just allowing ourselves to be touched and swayed by the unseen influences around us. It does not appear like an exaggeration to say that no man with sensibilities keen and imaginative—with any measure of poetic feeling moving him—is always able to resist the tremendous force of this sensuous show. Here arises a monument, which, seen from outside or inside, is the finest thing in the world. What gave it to Simon Peter? This inevitable question keeps pressing: how did the fisherman of Galilee reach an exaltation of fame like this? How was his life lifted into historic significance such as has moved the whole world for eighteen centuries in this way? The answer is easy: Simon was the exact agent the Lord wanted to employ at that time. The explanation of all extraordinary successes in this man's life is found in the fact that Christ had a work for him, and Christ made a sovereign choice of him to do it.

In one of his early papers concerning the apostolic age, Dean Stanley has called our attention to the fact that Simon's peculiar temperament fitted him for that exact transition moment in ecclesiastical history to which he was invited by providential events. A mingling of patriotism and piety—of personal enthusiasm with the national tradition—must be assumed, before we can understand him. And then we must remember how wonderful a field he was offered.

Indeed, whatever of mighty strength there was in such motives was secured and intensified by the discipleship of Jesus, into the depth of which he rushed with his undivided soul. When Andrew saw the Form, to which John the Baptist pointed his glance, and comprehended that the Messiah of his race was at the moment walking within reach of his hope, he was doubtless awakened to high expectations. But Andrew does not seem to have been capable of such masterful emotions as his brother felt in all he did for his new Teacher. The exalted heroism of the Jewish warrior was in Simon's heart; the inexhaustible zeal of the priesthood shone in his eyes; the unforgotten traditions of the entire nation nerved him to action; for this was the Messiah so long looked for. Hence, when at last he came into companionship with that Nazarene Rabbi, the whole power of his being went out towards one whom he was to follow as Master and Lord.

Sometimes he did not understand Jesus. He was always impulsively rushing up to him, as he did on the lake-shore just before the ascension; and, at the instant of arrival, was always abashed. His affection and his awe gave way to each other in turn, whenever either went into exercise. It was only gradually, and through frequent struggles, that he reached the clear light of the new life, and began to win and to wear its beautiful graces, as the Saviour grew more and more evidently revealed to his spiritual sight.

But his fidelity was fixed from the outset. He

called Omniscience for a witness even in his darkest hour: "Thou knowest that I love thee!" And so it has been well said by those who were familiar with the two dispensations, that this fisherman was swept away before the grand impulse of such disclosures of the Christ, far more effectually than some of the seers of old; for he had the reality of which they had but the sign. Hence his loyalty was fixed by one flash. What Ezekiel's vision, beside the river Chebar, was to him—what Daniel's glimmering pictures, upon the banks of Ulai, were to him—that Jesus' disclosure of himself, in the day spent at Bethabara, was to the fisherman Simon. He was never thereafter the same man. One glance at Immanuel did for his soul what the resplendent spectacle of wheels and whirlwinds, goats, rams, and indescribable living creatures, going to and fro in the shining air, did for the ancient seers. That spectacle filled them with awe; impressed their minds with solemnity; kindled them with faith; subdued them to service. And so here: the discovery of the Messiah in Jesus pervaded the whole soul of Simon Peter; he became a creature of his times.

The period in this world's history into which his life fell, will serve as an explanation of many peculiarities of his behavior; it has in it what fashioned the entire career of this fisherman; it shows how he was fitted at such a moment for the service brought to him. Great exigencies had arisen, and the dearth of true men was simply pitiable. When Simon the son of Jonas was

a boy of some ten years, playing among the pebbles on the shore of the Sea of Galilee, Jesus the son of Mary was born in Bethlehem. Thirty years afterward, the whole Jewish hierarchy was convulsed by the same forces that moved the common people to almost revolutionary excitement. There arose a tremendous discussion concerning the coming of the nation's Messiah; but at the same time it had to meet the agitating question which was still more awful, whether this peasant from Nazareth, who had suddenly appeared as a wandering rabbi with a following behind him, was himself the Christ they sought. Then all the skeptical forces in the world seemed acting restlessly at once, and the social, political, and religious world in Judæa began to rock with a tremulous kind of mysterious motion. The Hindus' fable is that this old earth is lodged on the back of a tortoise, and frequently along the ages it occurs that the tortoise becomes wearied, and so shifts his painful position: that makes an earthquake. There is something like this which is not fable: this world does rest on the back of a primeval reptile the name of which is Unbelief, and now and then he turns piteously in his slime. This was what made most commotion at the time when Tiberius was the emperor and Herod was the titular king.

What was wanted was—a man. There was no lack of monarchs; but that did not help much. Inspiration has said: "For the transgression of a land many are the princes thereof: but by a man of understanding and knowledge the state thereof shall be

prolonged." And it is an oriental malediction even down to the present day for an exceedingly angry man to hurl at his enemy: "May God multiply your own sheikhs!" And it is thought to be a very witty thing for an old moralist to say in our English language: "Patriotism is the last refuge of a scoundrel." But one who loves his country sighs when he has to admit it is true. Palestine was a poverty-stricken tributary of the Roman Empire; and yet the government found no lack of tax-gatherers to use in the consummation of its infamous purposes of extortion; it had plenty of applications for the office of publican among the Jews themselves. Standards of decency were scandalously lowered. Barriers of corruption were all broken down. This was to be expected: "the wicked walk on every side when the vilest men are exalted." But when Palestine needed patriots, when the long-predicted King called for subjects of his realm, when penitents to receive, and preachers to proclaim the new Gospel were wanted, then there was almost no response. Men became more precious than gold. Where were such men to be found in that day?

They had to be "raised up:" that is the inspired form of expression. God must choose his own instruments, train them, and bring them into conspicuousness by his own wisdom and providence and sovereignty.

But beginnings are very frequently small and dull. And most likely there will always be found some cavilers who will wonder at the choice that was

made of such persons as these first emissaries of the Gospel. Five apostles at once from a little village of seafaring men ! And Simon, son of Jonas, to be put in the lead !

Some things there are that people ought to remember. One is that Christianity, as a system of religious faith, has been definitely constructed for propagation by *rising*. Religion kindles in an upward direction—like a flame. Grades of society must be set on fire, like layers of twigs, *at the bottom*. The Jews were unphilosophical when they asked as a test question, “ Have any of the rulers believed on him ? ” If they had, the common people would never have heard him gladly. Humble souls are exalted by the reception of Jesus’ Gospel ; proud souls have to go down and be humbled before they can come up. To have attempted the conversion of that Israelitish nation through the reigning family of Herod and the nobles would have been as preposterous as to attempt to warm the sullen waters of the Dead Sea by floating beacons on its surface.

Again, it ought to be remembered that all the pressure exerted to prove these men mean and uneducated only redounds in the end to the glory of that divine wisdom which selected them. For those mighty successes which the Gospel has achieved through their industry show the working of celestial forces in exact proportion to the human weakness involved. This is the firm and unfailing retort of the ages. If men’s wisdom had taken the evangelization of such a world in hand, it would have se-

lected the profoundest rabbins, the acutest philosophers, the most eloquent orators, so as to grapple with the wilfulness of any opposition which Christianity was inevitably to receive. When Celsus urged that the apostles were “but a company of mean and illiterate persons, sorry mariners and fishermen,” Origen was quick to return upon him the answer, “Then it is evident their power was from heaven, and their religion divine.”

A man was wanted; here, then, he is found. Simon Peter commences a career: it is evident that refined and elegant people are not going to judge him fairly at the beginning. He makes a dreadfully poor show. We shall have to wait a few years, and then turn to our Bibles again. We find there two letters—called, in ordinary, quick-cut phrase, First and Second Peter. Who composed these epistles? This same man? Certainly: the Bethsaida fisherman. Thoroughly educated students have said that those two fragments of inspired Scripture are finished in the finest style of Greek prose in the New Testament. Who taught this man to write? What experience was it which moulded and mellowed that hard character into refinement, into tenderness ineffable, gentleness and beauty?

There is no verse in the Bible more manifestly true than this one—“The entrance of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple.” Insignificant indeed was the journey to Bethabara which led this man to meet his Master. But the transformation that followed it was over-

whelming. A great world lies between Simon and Peter.

But we need not go so far as that. It is not necessary that we should believe that the Lord selected Simon Peter for such an office as that he eventually filled because of his plain defects; rather, indeed, in despite of them. More likely, by far, he chose him for some wonderfully fine elements of character he possessed for the certain work he had specially ordained him to do. He received him to become a personal Christian, of course, because by grace he was a repentant and believing man. But as his apostle he selected Peter—as he seems all through the New Testament history, and as Divine Wisdom seems in like manner all through the Old Testament history, to have chosen human instruments and agents—because of an executive efficiency and promise of serviceableness in the accomplishment of some extraordinary results he desired. For this truth comes out always in the sacred annals—the omniscient God selects men for an end and for an acknowledged purpose; and he grounds his preference on their real fitness to compass the end and carry out the purpose. Hence, when we go on, looking ever for the higher virtues, seeking for exemplary superiority in individual goodness, searching, with eyes sometimes even captious and exacting, for striking evidences of perfect sainthood in the divinely-chosen instruments of history, most likely we shall be simply disappointed, and perhaps ashamed.

Some respect is due to Simon Peter. It is easy enough wildly to find fault with him; but we may as well be candid. Peter is an attractive sort of man after all. He is bold, generous, tender-hearted and earnest. Grace has a sharp fight with him, but Grace wins in the end; and while most of us are stumbling along, and exclaiming, pitifully discouraged, as did John Howard more than once, “O Lord God, why *me?*” we may as well remember that the last word this apostle ever wrote was a thoughtful admonition and counsel—“Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness. But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.”

It is time to have done with these cavils at the behavior of Christian men. They were never set before us because of goodness. None of them are perfect. It will be well for most people to imitate their strong points, before they caricature their weak ones. Let us say to each other seriously—with all recognition of Peter's failings, and not a denial of one of them—that any man who enters heaven will not reach a low seat if he is assigned a place at that old fisherman's feet!

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